

A YEAR IN LABOUR: RETHINKING POLITICAL PARTIES, CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS THROUGH ASSEMBLAGE AND AFFECT

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*I, Samuel Lloyd Page, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been
indicated in the thesis.*

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For Matt and Dad.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for a different approach towards the study of elections, campaigns and political parties than has conventionally been pursued in political and electoral geography. I argue that approaches in electoral geography have neglected the everyday lived experience of elections, and in political geography of recent there has been a distinct lack of consideration of the 'political party'. These issues have not gone unnoticed in either field and so I am answering several calls for renewal. To do this, I theorise campaigns, elections and parties through the Deleuzo-Guattarian (2013a, 2013b) concepts of assemblage and affect, highlighting the themes of people, materials and technology in my analysis. Starting with Labour's 2014 Manchester Conference and ending at their 2015 Brighton Conference, I conducted an ethnographical study of the British Labour Party and its relationship to the 7 May 2015 UK General Election. During this period, I participated in Labour's campaign for Hove in the south coast, interviewed participants of the wider Brighton and Hove Labour Party campaigns, recorded how social media related to the election and the subsequent Labour leadership election and lastly, conducted a discourse analysis. By focusing on the themes of leadership, people and materials through relations and experience, I show that there is a different iteration of the party that is becoming in each moment. I conclude by drawing out some theoretical discussions around assemblage and affect, specifically the notion of the 'abstract machine', arborescent/rhizomatic structures and the 'war machine'. I contribute to both electoral geography and political geography by reconceptualising elections, campaigns and political parties as entangled in a bodied, material, emotional and relational world.

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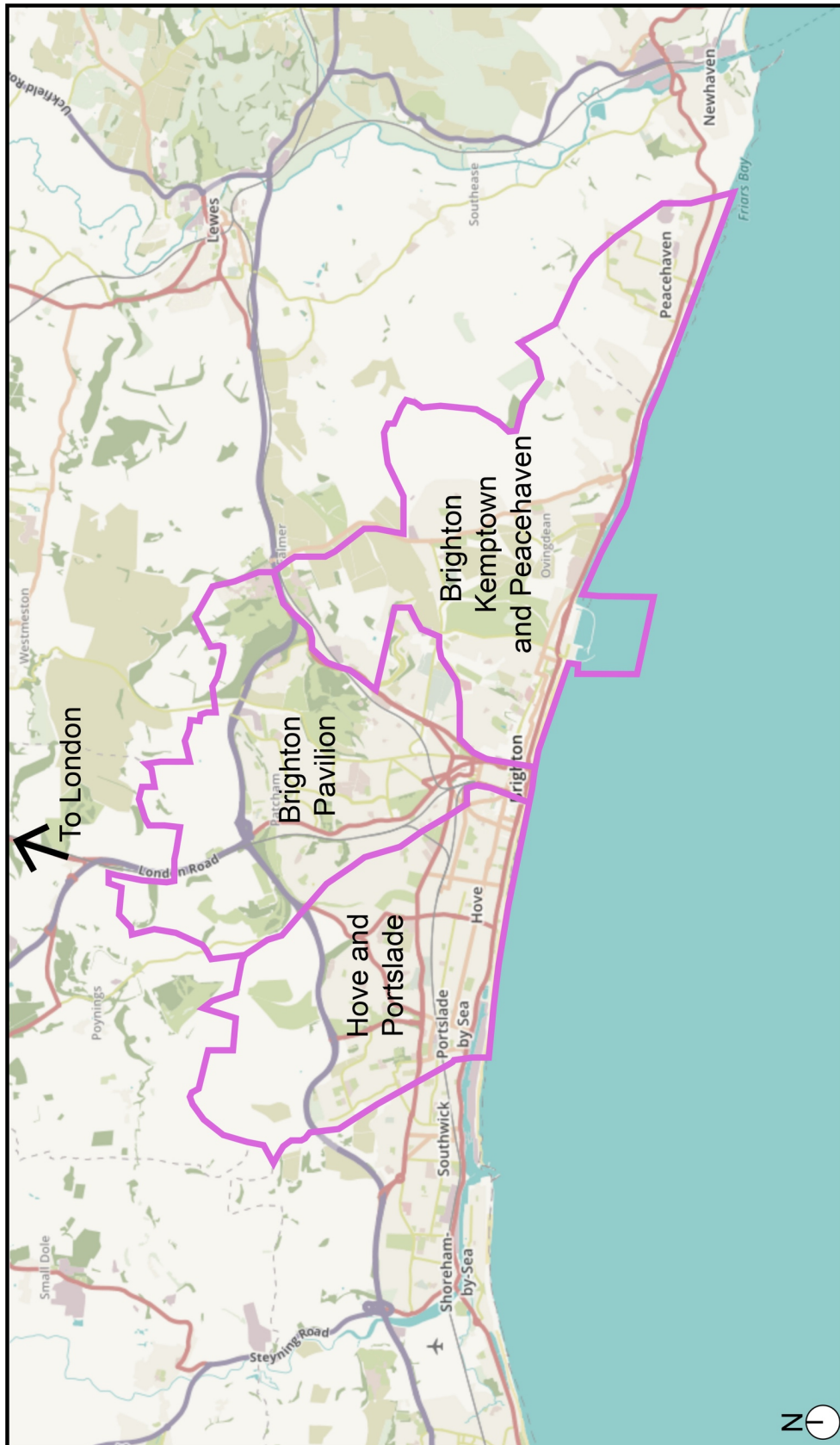
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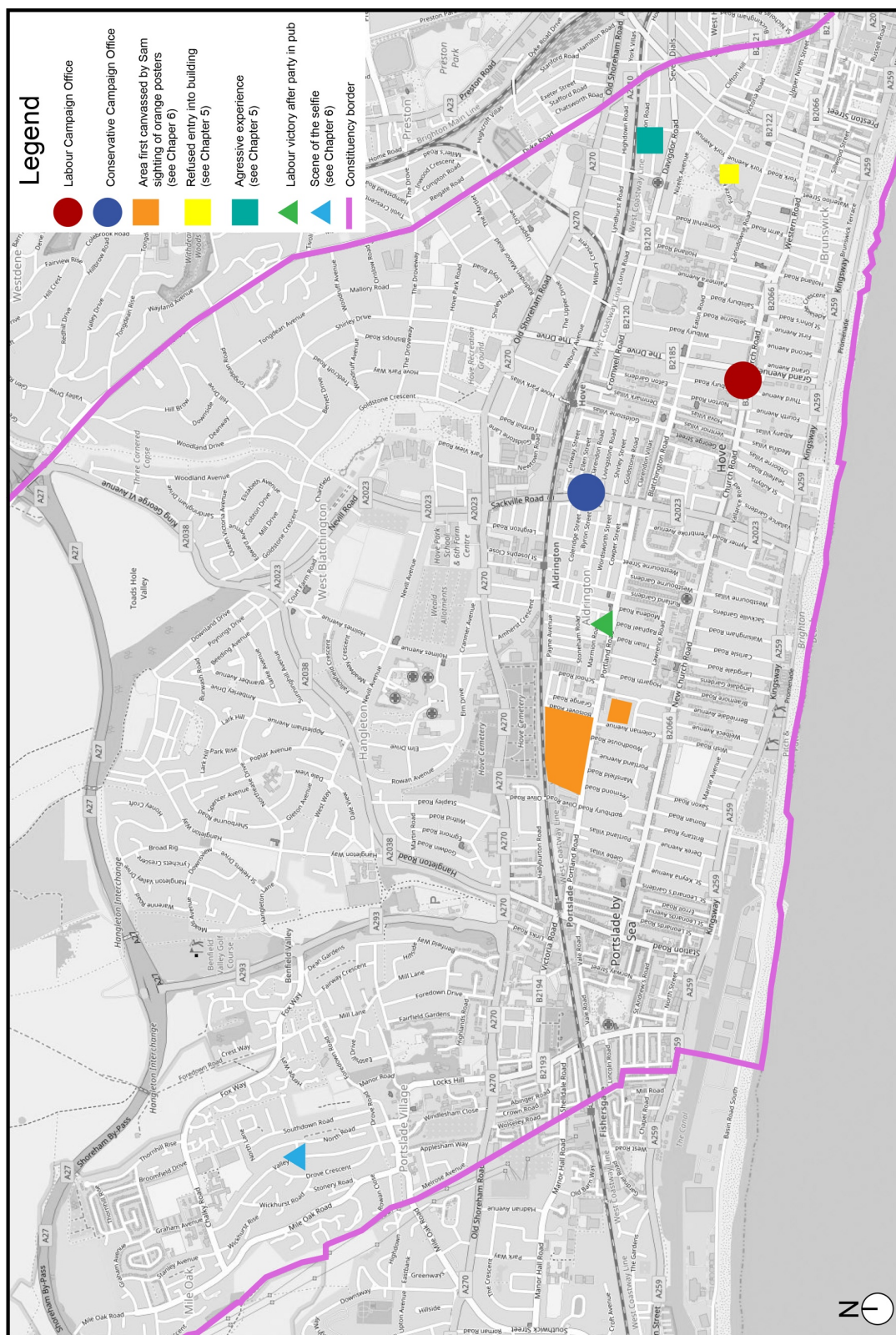
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ACRONYMS

CLPD	Campaign for Labour Party Democracy
CLP	Constituency Labour Party
MP	Member of Parliament
NEC	National Executive Committee
PCC	Parliamentary Candidate's Campaign
PCI	Italian Communist Party
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PM	Prime Minister
SNP	Scottish National Party



0.1 A map of the three Brighton and Hove constituencies



0.2 A map of the Hove campaign experience

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION:

POLITICAL PARTIES AS ASSEMBLAGES

In this thesis, I aim to show that elections are far more complex than their numerical results would indicate, and that the relations constructing political parties have more dimensions of intricacy than many theorisations and studies have thus far allowed. I am hoping to contribute to both electoral geography and political geography by reconceptualising elections, campaigns and political parties as entangled in a peopled, material, emotional and relational world through the concepts of assemblage and affect. Flint (2003: 618) argues that researchers who ‘do not identify themselves with political geography’ are doing some of political geography’s best work, and the line between political and social geography has been blurred. I am hoping to build on this and introduce more social considerations to ‘conventional’ electoral geography. In doing this, I shall be contributing to the more-than-human turn in human geography that has recently focused on relations and the becoming¹ (by which I mean the continuous change and flux) of subjects (see Robbins and Marks 2009; Anderson et al. 2012; Dittmer 2014b; Müller 2015). I also wish to help further Painter’s (2006) argument that the lines between big P- (State) and small p- (everyday) politics are blurred. Finally, I contribute to Springer’s (2016) call to deeply question the performance and maintenance of the State. I do this by investigating the role of an embodied and material party in the everyday of an election campaign.

¹ There are many technical terms in relation to assemblage and affect, and I try my best to define and reiterate those definitions as this thesis proceeds.

This emphasis contrasts with much of geography's hitherto theorisation of elections, campaigns and political parties. For instance, by tending to focus on the numerical expressions of elections, electoral geography has failed to bear witness to the experience of campaigns and elections as lived by those who enact them. We can see this in the work of the prominent electoral geographer, Ron Johnston. For instance, in Johnston et al.'s (2017) paper on the 2015 UK General Election (which is also the focus of much of my empirical work), the difference of the conception of elections is clear through their analysis of only the statistics around votes cast to explore the meaning of elections. They assert that '[l]ittle changed in the core of the British party system between 2010 and 2015 [...] the two largest parties together obtained 66.7% of the votes cast at the former [...] and 69% at the latter.' I would argue that, whilst having a statistical truth, a focus on numbers renders campaigns and the time in between elections devoid of political, social and cultural significance. For these electoral geographers, the importance of political expression is through counting votes, not in the experience of that vote. In Chapter 2 I will show further how such an approach as that of Johnston et al. (2017) and others (Forest 2004; Clark 2002; Archer 2002; Johnston and Pattie 2006, 2011; Shin 2001; Shin and Agnew 2007) negates the experience of political parties, electoral campaigns, casting votes, and the result.

Another matter that I am rethinking is that of the political party itself, an actor missed from much political geography (Page and Dittmer 2015). Low (2003: 626) writes that in political geography, the focus on the social-political aspects of politics has led to a 'rejection of certain central "traditional" themes' and as such 'the topic of the state has [...] been constructed as something of a diversion' from the other political issues running concurrently. Agnew (1996: 130) was perhaps right when he argued that electoral geography was being left behind because 'so much of the best new thinking has come from

a political-intellectual left inclined to regard elections as exercises in a bourgeois politics they would like to put behind them'. It would not be fair to say that political parties are totally absent from human geography, however, if they are mentioned they are frequently used as unexamined nouns. For instance, if we take one of Swyngedouw's (2011: 228) treatises on post-politics, the spectre of 'environmental parties' appears a homogenised solid body as they retreat from 'engaging in politics of contestation'. He develops his thesis from Žižek: 'the conflict of global ideological visions embodied in different parties which compete for power is replaced by the collaboration of enlightened technocrats [...] and liberal multiculturalists' (cited in Swyngedouw 2011: 226). Here, we can see a tendency to treat State politics (or potentially any State political organisation, or even the State itself) as if it is a body, in and of itself, with its internal mechanisms homogenised. These phrases – 'environmental parties', 'technocrats', or even (as I shall argue) 'The Labour Party' – are abstract, with no detail, and no differentiation between these State actors, nor how they are constructed and maintained.

By contrast, I am attempting to evoke a political party as created through the relations between people, materials, and virtuals in different spaces and at different times. (To qualify the term the 'virtual', I refer to Buchanan (2010: n.a.) who writes that for Deleuze, 'both the actual and virtual are fully real – the former has concrete existence, whereas the latter does not, but it is no less real [...] this distinction can readily be seen by giving thought to the state of an idea: it may only exist in our heads, or on paper, but its effects are fully real and may also be fully actual.') The body of theory I will use is assemblage and affect. By assemblage, I mean *a constantly changing collective body composed of singularities that does something*. And by affect, I mean paying attention to the bodily reactions from experiences (Colebrook 2002; Woodward 2014). Specifically, while

other theorisations of affect are discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), in the empirical chapters (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) I will utilise Colebrook's (2002: 38) explanation that we can 'think of affect in terms of a form of pre-personal perception. I watch a scene in a film and my hearts race, my eye flinches and I begin to perspire. Before I even think or conceptualise there is an element of response that is prior to any decision [...] Affect is intensive [...] it is not objectifiable and quantifiable as a thing'. Affect has a complicated relationship to ideas of emotion, but we can separate them. The dictionary Merriam-Webster (2017b) defines 'emotion' in several ways, but two relevant entries are: 'the affective aspect of consciousness'; and 'a conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body' (Merriam-Webster 2017a). By contrast, 'affect' is defined as 'a set of observable manifestations of a subjectively experienced emotion' (Merriam-Webster 'affect', n.a.). Thus, emotion and affect are interlinked: Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 467) write that '[a]ffect is the active discharge of emotion.' In my utilisation, I define affect as the subjective unconscious change through an experience. Thus, while I will discuss the contested idea of affect in the next chapter, I assert here that I find Colebrook's definition practical when exploring ethnographic experiences.

The lived experience of an electoral campaign is at the heart of this thesis. Therefore, I present an understanding of the British Labour Party during the run up and aftermath of the 2015 UK General Election which concentrates on experiences and events. I will show that, though each expression of the party is related, the party at the conferences was different from Labour during the general election campaign(s), and different, again, during the leadership election campaign. I demonstrate that Labour is a multiplicity created

through its relations and without an essence. Moreover, each of these spaces presents 'events' within Labour, meaning moments that 'spur change, [...] reshape the conceptual fabric of connectivity, relationships, pathways and institutions [...] events begin from the domain of affect and the virtual (temporal) but are only actualised in space' (Beck and Gleyzon 2017: 329). I also intend to show the always-changing (in other words, always becoming) relationship between 'society' and political parties by not drawing a line between the two but instead, by witnessing and participating in, and questioning how lines appear, in Labour in the four different settings: the 2014 Manchester and 2015 Brighton conferences; The Brighton and Hove Labour Party's 2015 election campaign; and on social media.

By attempting to understand only some of the moments at which we come to be enrolled in a State, I try to challenge theories that present a rationale for why elections play out as they do. In assemblage, there is no beginning or end to any subject matter because they are always becoming, always in flux, always following new 'lines of flight', as Deleuze and Guattari's expression goes (Colebrook 2002: 57). Through looking at their various different expressions in different times and spaces (different 'cuts'), we can differentiate between these assemblages. In addition, I will cast a critical eye on some aspects of assemblage and affect. Deleuze and Guattari followed Foucault in proposing their concepts as part of a 'toolbox' rather than a singular, solid theory (Grossberg 2014: 3). There has been so much variation in analysis that Grossberg (2014) casts doubt on the idea that there could ever be *one* assemblage theory. Acuto and Curtis (2014: 3) argue that many different interpretations of assemblage means that 'we can now legitimately talk of many styles of assemblage thinking – a feature that makes this approach less of a *theory* and more of a repository of methods and ontological stances towards the social.' I would like to explore and call into question some of those myriad interpretations through their employment in

my analysis. While Deleuze and Guattari did not ‘call for our strict adherence to their ideas’ (Buchanan 2015: 383, also see Grossberg 2014), I think it may prove insightful to some of the ways assemblage has been interpreted if we interrogate it at the same time as utilising it. Most particularly, I question the potential use and understanding of the concept of the ‘abstract machine’, which I interpret as a ‘deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan’ (Buchanan 2015: 385) for much of this thesis, as well as questioning the use of assemblage itself (also see Tampio 2015; McFarlane 2011a, 2011b; Brenner et al. 2011). In the conclusion, I shall contrast this with a more esoteric reading of the abstract machine, showing that different interpretations of this have different potentials. My curiosity around the abstract machine is a question of what can we learn about political parties by looking at those ‘software programs’ that attempt to guide their becoming. My understanding of these is thus an important indication as to how I approach assemblage. In what follows then, I try to construct something that is in the spirit of, and influenced by, Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts. It is in this light that I present several Labour assemblages to help electoral geography ‘turn’, as other human geographies have towards the relations that constitute the bodies we study, and so further political geography’s critique of a detailed state.

However, before I do that, some contextual basis is necessary. Thus, the next section is a brief description of the electoral set up of the Parliament of the UK, the main legislative power in the country. Following that is a conventional understanding of how the 2015 General Election played out. After this, I shall present a brief overview of assemblage, followed by the research questions, and finally I present the structure of the rest of the thesis.

THE UK PARLIAMENT

The UK Parliament is housed in the Palace of Westminster in London, and split into two chambers: the unelected House of Lords, with 798 seats; and the elected House of Commons, with 650 seats. It is the central legislative body of the UK (there are other, more local 'national' bodies – the Scottish Parliament and the respective Welsh and Northern Irish assemblies). In both houses, there are currently two main parties: The Conservative and Unionist Party (normally The Conservatives, or the Tories; established 1834), and the Labour Party (established 1900). There are several smaller parties (and Northern Ireland's relationship to Westminster is another thing entirely), but those others that bear weight in this thesis are: the Liberal Democrats (Lib Dems, established 1988); the Scottish National Party (SNP, established 1934); the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP, established 1993); and the Green Party (the Greens, established 1990).

The UK is divided into constituencies of various size within which a voter has a single vote for their choice of candidate for a local Member of Parliament (MP) who will represent that constituency in Westminster. The UK's electoral system is known as 'First-Past-the-Post', meaning that whoever has the most votes wins the seat; and the party with the most MPs has the right to attempt to form a government. An uncontested majority in the House of Commons is 326 seats (just over half), in which case the leader of that party has the right to form a government and become the Prime Minister (PM). In cases where no party has a majority, the largest might try and run a 'minority government', or form a coalition government with another party. Having a majority in parliament is important because a majority of legislature can only become law once it has been voted for by both Houses.

In the 2010 election, the Conservatives (under David Cameron) won the largest share of the House of Commons, with 306 seats, 17 short of a majority. The result was a hung parliament, which saw the formation of a coalition government between the Tories and the Lib Dems (led by Nick Clegg), which had 57 MPs. Labour (led by Gordon Brown) was the second largest party with 258, the SNP had 6 seats and the Greens had one (Caroline Lucas, in Brighton Pavilion).

One of the laws introduced by the coalition government was that of fixed term parliaments. Previously the length of a parliament had not been set beforehand, and it was therefore dependent upon the government to call an election at any time up to five years from when it had been elected, whereas from 2010 a general election would be called every five years. Thus, the 8 May 2015 UK General Election was the first predictable election.

A CONVENTIONAL OVERVIEW OF THE

5 MAY 2015 UK GENERAL ELECTION

In 1997, after seventeen very painful years in opposition that appeared to witness the death of the traditional Left (and Labour as a true mass party), a reimagined (neoliberal, presidential) New Labour returned to thirteen years in power (Thorpe 2001; Coates 2013). In 2010, Labour lost the election. However, the party proved that it was still an electoral force by helping to win the 2014 Scottish referendum. Johnston et al. (2017: 60) report that polling suggested that there was not much between the two parties: 'Labour and the Conservatives each polled between 30% and 37% at almost all polls'. Yet, Miliband and company were described as unpopular leaders (Nardelli 2014). Thus, in 2015 Labour found itself with a chance, albeit one fraught with challenges, of returning to power on 7 May.

No election is a simple binary tussle between Labour and Conservative. Johnston et al. (2017: 60) focus on how the British electoral system creates different contests between different political parties in different seats: '[g]oing in to the 2015 contest, the country was dominated by three groups of seats in each of which only two parties has a reasonable chance of success.' We should therefore turn our attention beyond the two main parties. In 2010, the Green Party's Caroline Lucas won Brighton Pavilion from Labour, becoming the first Green Member of Parliament (MP) in the UK, alongside a small majority in the Brighton and Hove Council. By 2015, there was a 'green surge' (i.e. a growing popularity) reported amongst the liberal-left in terms of polls and the Greens' membership (Harris 2015). Elsewhere, there was a fear that 'Labour [was] losing its working-class support and [the United Kingdom Independence Party] [was] reaping the benefits' (Cruddas 2016: 7), and the potential obliteration of the Liberal Democrats (who had done well in 2010) was predicted by the polls (Dominiczak 2015). Finally, the Scottish National Party (SNP) threatened to take control north of the English border; the Labour leadership had developed a vexatious relationship with the (right wing) press (Martinson 2015), and there was tension between various internal Labour groups and factions (Riley-Smith 2014). Labour faced many different challenges on many different fronts.

More generally, as parties came to fight over the neoliberal 'middle ground', a 'post-political' malaise was theorised to exist in some Western electoral systems (Swyngedouw 2010; 2011). These systems are said to be suffering from a 'democratic deficit', as in the divorce of economics from politics (Varoufakis 2015), or a 'crisis of democracy' (Mouffe 1993; Runciman 2013; Schwarzmantal 2007; Hind 2010). This is seemingly marked by low voter turnout, dwindling party memberships (particularly on the left), the rise of right-wing parties that had been 'fringe' in the West for the best part of the late-twentieth century

(UKIP, Greece's Golden Dawn, France's Front National, to name but a few), and a general lack of interest and disbelief in (Statist) politics. This condition was also apparent in the 2010 UK general election where turnout was 65.1% (considered low but the highest since 1997, itself the lowest turnout since 1935) with no majority for any party, while 34.17% turned out for the 2014 MEP and local elections. This was in stark contrast to the 84.59% turnout at the Scottish Referendum, which showed the face of a potentially impassioned electorate, almost half of whom were asking to leave the United Kingdom.

The post-political malaise did not appear to have lifted for the 7 May 2015 General Election. The Conservatives Party won their first majority since 1992, receiving 36.9% of a 66.4% turnout (the highest turnout since 1997, and 1.3% more than 2010); Labour achieved 30.4%; the Liberal Democrats lost 49 seats, retaining eight (7.9%), while the Scottish National Party won all fifty seats bar two in Scotland (4.7%). While the polls predicted the Scottish result, the result in the rest of the country seemed to come as something of a shock (Cruddas 2016). In a report about how Labour lost the election and how it might win the next, Labour MP John Cruddas (2016: 7) highlighted the issue of confidence in economic stability, arguing that '[v]oters abandoned Labour because they believed Labour lacked economic credibility and the perception was that it would be profligate in government. In contrast, they trusted the Tories with their economic security.' Then, Miliband resigned on 8 May, triggering a leadership election within the Labour Party.

Four MPs successfully passed the first round, which required the support of 15% of the other Labour MPs. They were Liz Kendal, who was understood as a Blair-follower (Myers 2015); Yvette Cooper and Andy Burnham were 'continuity Miliband' (Sparrow 2015: n.a.) and Jeremy Corbyn scraped onto the ballot as a Bennite left-wing candidate (Seymour 2016). While an outsider at the beginning of the contest, Corbyn became the favourite by

the end of four months of campaigning. The contest lasted until 10 September 2015, when Corbyn was announced the winner on 12 September with 59.5% of the vote.

This conventional description of the general election and the subsequent Labour leadership election is focused around numerical results, while the reasons for voting one way or another are cast as a rational market-like response to events. The campaign's role is to 'convince' people, in a rational way: Cruddas' (2016) term that voters were not 'convinced' speaks of ideas of political rationality. Indeed, despite Johnston et al.'s (2017: 60) insistence that '[m]any of the features of the election [...] were consistent with expectations based on the extensive polling reported in the media', as I show in Chapter 7, it certainly did not feel that way at time. Looking at the constituency areas I studied for this thesis, Hove and Kemptown were battlegrounds between Conservatives and Labour, while Brighton Pavilion was between Green and Labour. These contests were presented as straightforward, with boundaries between seats clearly marked. By contrast, I wish to show a different experience of the election for, as I will demonstrate, these boundaries were and are blurred: for instance, some voters in Kemptown did not know they were in Kemptown and thought they could vote for the Brighton Pavilion Green MP. Moreover, as we shall see, the feeling towards the other parties also differed in different spaces, which were not strictly based around seat borders. I thus reconceive what the party is during different events and in different spaces (for my purposes: conferences, campaign, and the leadership election). Ultimately, assemblage and affect suggest that the 'felt' result of the campaign and the election are as important as the numerical result and both are, of course, related.

ASSEMBLAGE AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Part of the point of this thesis is to apply a reading of assemblage during an ethnographic experience. It is thus partly about *testing* assemblage to see what it may produce in relation to the fields of electoral and political geography. Following an assemblage ontology, wholes become fragmented and therefore open systems, populated by many different components, such as people, materials, and virtuals, each of which may also be parts of other assemblages. By materials, I mean both physical and digital materials, which can play important parts in the assemblage. The assemblage is always changing (becoming) and components come in and out of it, but it is also never totally 'complete'. An assemblage is, therefore, in Deleuze and Parnet's (1987: 69) words, 'a multiplicity made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures [...] the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a "sympathy".' In other words, an assemblage is a collective assortment of different things that work together. As such, I will look the Labour Party as an assemblage during an election, bodying itself from a heterogeneous population enmeshed in multiple spheres of inseparable influence (economic, religious, social, and so on). However, a consideration of the temporary structure of an assemblage introduces larger questions for representative democratic states, such as of what it is that parties and populations consist: from where does their validity, stability, or form come?

Parties may play key roles in the everyday experience of the state (Painter 2006; Woodward 2014) and in the relationships between states, and remain pertinent not only outside those 'post-political' states but within them as well. I argue that the Labour Party can be understood as part of the Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of 'State', that the State is 'what

makes the distinction between governors and governed possible' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 418): they are 'the great collective bodies [that] are differentiated and hierarchical organisms that on the one hand enjoy a monopoly over a power or function and on the other hand send out local representatives' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 426). As such, I argue that the qualitative result of elections and the campaigns that lead up to them affect the everyday existence of people, as well as the performance of representative democracy and the legitimisation of the state. I understand performance to be 'the flow of practice in everyday life as embodied, as caught up with and committed to the creation of affect, as contextual, and as inevitably technologized through language and objects' (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000: 415). To clarify, as there is no essential thing that something is (person or otherwise), it is always performing in relation to the context, and in turn always affecting other things and how other things are performed.

Thus, any one electoral campaign and result not only helps to shape the affective conditions of the populace and organisations in-between elections, but it also helps to shape other elections. I argue that elections do not determine the next few years of State politics and they do not set in stone how the politics of State will unfold over a parliament. They are one event of many, but they can be influential. The temporal, spatial, material, bodily and virtual aspects are interrelated and parties, states and populations are caught up with one another, and affect one another. For instance, the political theorist William Connolly (2008: x) has written of the US Republican Party's 'evangelical-capitalist resonance machine' that combines blue-collar workers with religious zealots and free market neoliberals. This helped George W. Bush into government twice and gave birth to the Tea Party. He asserts that 'revenge' has become 'incorporated into one wing of [US] Christianity', and this 'resonate[s] with exclusionary drives and claims to special entitlement

through the cowboy sector of [US] American capitalism' (Connolly 2008: 7). The term 'machine' is in frequent use in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari (2013b: 12) stipulating that '[e]verything is a machine,' by which they clarify that 'there is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one with the other.' Colebrook (2002: 56) writes that Deleuze's concept of a machine is that it is 'nothing more than its connections; it is not made by anything, is not for anything and has no closed identity [...] different connections produc[e] different machines.' In other words, as argued by Colebrook (2002: 81), the machine is what I have called an assemblage thus far. As for resonance, Connolly (2008: 39) quotes Webster's dictionary that defines it as 'to resound ...; a vibration of large amplitude ... caused by a small periodic stimulus of the same or near the same period as the natural vibration of the system'. This resonance-machine is not a coalition, then, but rather emerges from particular affective relations between its participants and has consequences for the wider population, as evident:

[I]n the market apologism and scandal mongering of the electronic news media, in mobilization drives by Fox News, the Republican Party, and campaign ads, in administrative edicts to roll back environmentalism, weaken labor, and curtail minority rights in the name of religious morality, in right-wing appointments to the Supreme Court in support of preemptive wars, in tolerance or much worse of state practices of torture that negate the Geneva Convention, and in propagating a climate of fear and loathing against the Islamic world. The resonance machine that results both infiltrates the logic or perception and inflects the understanding of economic interests. (Connolly 2008: 40)

Thus, I follow Connolly by arguing that it would be a mistake not to attend to these machines as they play important functions in the affective conditions of not only the elections and campaigns but the performance of the state and news media as well. Moreover, if at one point the applicability of 'post-politics' to Western electoral systems made intuitive sense it would be wrong to simply write off electoral experiences as 'bourgeois politics', as Agnew (1996: 130) suggests others were doing.

Neither Tony Blair nor Barack Obama's politics challenged the underlying neoliberal hegemony of their era and yet both their various campaigns resonated affectively with significant parts of their populations, both in and outside their respective nations, as well as performing and providing legitimisation of their respective states. Additionally, as the effect of the 2008 economic crash spread, the reactions to it – from the various Occupy movements, to French economist Thomas Piketty (2014) becoming a best-selling author, to Ed Miliband's 'Cost of Living' campaign, to Corbyn's successful leadership bid, to Podemos in Spain, the Pirate Party in Iceland, or Syriza in Greece, amongst others – continued to bring questions of neoliberalism to the fore in Europe, the UK and the US, potentially making economics political again and state politics increasingly contested and relevant. Moreover, as I will show, it certainly did not *feel* like a 'post-political' situation when I was in the middle of the assemblage performing the (local Labour) campaign, nor in what I witnessed during the aftermath of the election. Indeed, as 7 May grew closer the election seemed to grow in intensity both within the campaign and on the door-step.

So, while Springer (2013) may have a point that Statist politics may only reproduce more Statist politics, homogenising the State does not question how they are manifested and performed. Instead, I wish to respond to Springer's (2016) call for geographers to question deeply the formation and necessity of states, which I will do by looking at some of the fundamental practices of an elected representative democracy and those parties that maintain it. Following him and Jeffrey (2012), I consider this thesis an attempt to look at the legitimacy of the state through the practice of representative democratic politics. I argue that the relations between different people, materials, intensities and virtuals produce different contexts through which the state and capitalism are (re)produced through those collective practices, some of which I was witness to in this thesis. In so doing I am building

on Allen and Cochrane's (2010: 1072-3) argument that 'the powers of the state are not so much "above us" as more or less present through mediated and real-time connections, some direct, others more distanced [...] its ability to exercise its *hierarchical powers of reach* [...] reflect a topological appreciation of space and place', and adapting it to the research of parties by questioning how the parties may be differently manifested in different spaces. I want to de-centre the idea of centralised parties, of the homogenous term 'Labour', to move away from discourses that place Obama, Blair, and the Republican Party on a pedestal, or at the centre, of affective politics. I intend to do this by demonstrating that party manifestations are made through the many relations between people, materials, and virtuals, entangled simultaneously in multiple assemblages, shaping and being shaped by them. As such, there is no clear, sharp distinction between any one body of actors from another, either in society or political parties.

The wider concerns behind this are the understanding, meaning, stability, (re)production, and manifestations of representative democratic states and their relationship with populations (Painter 2006; Springer 2016; Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Woodward 2014), as well as the role of technology in democracies (Graham et al. 2016; Groshek and Koc-Michalska 2017; Harris and Harrigan 2015; Just and Latzer 2017). This involves reconceptualising elections, political parties, and campaigns through their involvement with people, virtuals and materials. To highlight issues that are tangible on a local level, I investigate some of the assemblages that compose the Labour party: particularly the relationship between the leadership and the 'local' party, and how technologies enable these relations. I do this through examining the Labour conferences and election campaign for May 2015 in one city, Brighton and Hove (despite the name, it is one city), and the subsequent leadership contest. I suggest that the various roles people

play in these events are crucial not only to political parties but to the meaning and stability of a state that is made valid through representative democracy. In the final two parts of this introduction, I first introduce the research questions, and then explain the structure of the thesis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In using the concept of assemblage, it is necessary to decide where to 'cut' the material. In other words, research questions direct us to the focus of study. As such, I have identified three points on which to focus my research: the leadership(s), the people, and the technology. By leadership, I mean those considered the party's 'leadership' nationally and locally (the MPs, organisers, council candidates, advisors and others). By people, I mean the 'humans' who embody the party in different spaces as well as those on the 'receiving' end of the campaign. Protevi (2009: 33) conceives such individuals as 'individual bodies politic' so as to attend to the idea that their subjectivities are always emerging and changing in relation to the other people, materials and virtuals that are in flux around them. I understand technology to mean the utilisation of (specifically) digital tools for organisation within the party campaign and the creation of physical and digital materials for campaigning, as well as the realm of social media with which the campaign materials tried to engage.

No one question is answered by a singular method, nor a single empirical chapter. As such, the first question is applicable to all four empirical chapters. It is based on considering the 'becoming' of the party through assemblage:

1. How do the various leaderships, technologies and people intersect in the becoming of Labour assemblage(s) during an election campaign?

As I will discuss further in the methodology (Chapter 3), all of the methods used – participant observation, digital participation, interviews and discourse analysis – had the potential to trace issues around this question. Participant observation gave me experience of the relations between the various leaderships, technologies, and people as they perform the campaign. Digital participant observation also helped to reveal some of the use of social media in the campaign *by* those campaigning. Interviews provided reflections on at the interactions between these components. Fox and Alldred (2015: 407) have highlighted ‘observation and interviews’ as methods for exploring assemblages for their power to ‘identify assembled relations, and the affects and capacities produced in bodies that together make an assemblage work.’ However, without a knowledge of the context, much of how these relations are coming together may be missed. As such, the discourse analysis provided information in the context of this assemblage, but also specifically on the leadership’s performance, as well as on some reportage of the various local campaigns.

Chapter 4 addresses this question by looking at the becoming of Labour in the two conferences; Chapters 5 and 6 are involved with the local expression of Labour; and Chapter 7 is concerned with the leadership contest and how my social media bubble relates to a changing Labour Party. To develop details to answering this question, there are sub-questions to this that focus on different chapters. All three questions and their sub-questions, are relevant to all empirical chapters.

a) How do the different components understand their relationship with the different leaderships?

a) How do the different Labour assemblages express their relationship to society?

b) How do encounters with 'society' shape how volunteers embody the Brighton and Hove District Labour Party?

a) What role do virtuals play in the manifestation of Labour in the actual

b) What role does the abstract machine have in the different Labour assemblages?

'1(a)' addresses the different expressions of the Labour multiplicity, which changes expressions in the different spaces I encountered and with which I worked. '1(b)' is relevant to all the chapters, but it takes a particular focus in Chapter 7 as some new members joining Labour during the leadership contest were accused of 'entryism'. Indeed, this event brought into direct focus the meaning of 'the Labour Party', and who has the right to it. Lastly, '1(c)' is a consideration of the Deleuzo-Guattarian (2013a) concept of the 'abstract machine'. In the empirical chapters, I search for a Buchanan/Patton understanding of the abstract machine ('the deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan' (Buchanan 2015: 385)) in each space of the fieldwork, and discuss how it may appear or change in the different contexts. I will look at questions regarding this theory in the next chapter, and consider other expressions of it in the conclusion.

Due to the influence of Obama, some (Bell 2015; Bryne 2015; Grossman 2015) touted the potential for 2015 to see 'the first real social media general election', as Bryne

(2015: 5) termed it. Since I also wished to have a focus on the relationship the party had with those medias, I thus also ask:

2. How do digital technologies intersect with the becoming of the campaign?
 - a) How did the Labour campaign utilise and relate to the new digital social media technologies?
3. What is the relationship between my digital social media bubble and political parties?
 - a) What is the role of political parties within a bubble?
 - b) How do bubbles relate to political events?

Question 2 is answered by Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and methodologically informed through evidence gathered during participant observation, as I witnessed first-hand the use of digital technology, both in the implementation of the campaign, as well as in the use of digital social media. Thus, my digital participant observation is also relevant. Question 3 was also informed by my digital participant observation, as well as the discourse analysis. Chapter 5 considers the technology the local party used to canvass the area. Chapter 6 focuses on how the materials for the campaign were created, both physically and online. It takes into particular consideration the role of the volume of the material produced by the campaign. Finally, Chapter 7 considers the digital material around the Corbyn leadership campaign. Thus, Chapter 7 also answers Question 3, as well as bearing in mind the concerns of 'entryism' that Question 1(b) considers. Chapter 6's second half is also addressed to Question 3, looking at the digital campaign of Labour during the 2015 election. This question

is also addressed by Chapter 7 in which I consider how my social media bubble witnessed the leadership contest.

STRUCTURE

In this introduction, I have already started to critique the literature on political parties, campaigns and elections in political and electoral geography. I expand and expound on this by arguing for a relational, more-than-human turn in electoral geography in the first part of Chapter 2, a literature review. I build upon a plethora of evidence to argue that the literature of electoral geography has overcoded² both political parties and voters, leaving them relatively underexplored. By this, I mean that the codes have become accepted and unquestioned. After this, I turn to theorisations of political parties in the social sciences where I take up critiques of Foucault's Governmentality and Swyngedouw's 'post-politics.' I then look towards the wider social science literature, specifically at the influential theories of Weber and Gramsci in understanding political parties. Finally, I investigate what has recently been written in sociology and political science about parties, arguing that while these critiques are valid I find their methods of going forward lack that which assemblage may provide, such as a focus on the relations that construct the campaign, a focus on materials used in the campaigns and the effect of the campaign and subsequent election result.

In the second half of the literature review, I conceptualise political parties and elections through assemblage and affect. I argue that because of the many varied

² Colebrook (2002: 108) explains that to overcode is when an 'image becomes a sign of some social meaning.'

interpretations of assemblage (perhaps by design of Deleuze and Guattari), the utiliser of assemblage must construct their own concept of it. Thus, I build a lexicon based on my own one-line definition of a social assemblage as *a constantly changing collective body composed of singularities that does something*. After elaborating on this, I conceptualise affect in a way I feel is practical by trying to understand people coming together to form assemblages, as well as by addressing concerns over an intensive concept of time and the relation assemblage has with research.

In Chapter 3, I present the methodology that I used to conduct the fieldwork. First, I present an overview of Brighton and Hove, where much of the research was conducted, and argue it is a suitable place of study for my purposes. I then present an ethnography that I conceived through four main methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, autoethnography, and discourse analysis. I argue that these methods work well together and no singular method answers any one research question. Instead, they are complimentary, with varying relations to the research questions. This means that in one chapter, one method may take precedence in addressing a question but it is never alone. Also in this chapter, I talk about what means I used to begin analysing the data, what ethical concerns I had and the hazards I (potentially) faced. Lastly, I present my relationship to Labour and how it developed and briefly talk about my own general political positioning.

In my fourth (and first empirical) chapter, I present an analysis of the two Labour conferences that I studied during my fieldwork. The 2014 Manchester Conference and the 2015 Brighton Conference were the first and last assemblages of Labour that I encountered during my fieldwork. In the first half, I demonstrate that the party conference itself is not a neatly bounded thing but rather there is a performance by the people and through the materials of the conference, that performs a party neatly bound and removed from the city

in which the event is happening. In the second half, I focus on the on-stage leadership and its relationship with the conference audience and the presence of media. I argue that it is not only politicians who perform certain 'ways-of-being' Labour (Page and Dittmer 2016), but also the audience that plays a role in the performance of the assemblage, in turn collectively performing Labour for the various audiences. But this is not simply a performance since the conference is host to affective relations which shape how it plays out. In conventional terms, these conferences were important because it was at the 2014 conference that the Labour leadership began to code the 2015 general election campaign, and it was at the 2015 conference that the party had elected a new leader as the result of the General Election. They offered a chance for the leadership to present a desired code for Labour. It was here where I began to discover how the election is more than just the result itself, or composed of the rational choices that others assert it to be.

In Chapter 5, I turn to the experience of the election campaign and focus on Brighton and Hove through participant observation and interviews. This chapter is the first of two on the experience of the campaign and I continue my argument that the election is more than just the result. I look at how the party became through the relations between, and amongst, the technologies, leadership and people that became the campaigns. Due to the dependence and focus on modern bureaucratic technologies, I introduce Postman's (1993) concept of a 'technopoly' to analyse the relationship between the local party leadership and the voter-identity software, Contact Creator. I found this useful in relation to the concept of the 'abstract machine' that directed the intended expressions and visions of the campaign. Through the difference between the intended campaign and the experienced one, I demonstrate that ideas of hierarchy can be seen as undermined. Thus, after this, I discuss the experience of the implementation of the door-step campaign. I then consider the

limitations of Contact Creator, specifically considering the design of the ‘conversations’ that we door-steppers had when knocking on doors. Finally, I discuss the effect that the experience of the campaign technique had on the relations of those who embodied the local campaigns. In this, I show an affective relationship that territorialised door-steppers and was made even more intense through particular ‘events’ that created more than a simple ‘being with’, rather an ‘experiencing-with’.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the material produced by local Labour campaigns, physically and digitally. First, I focus on the use of physical materials constructed through modern technologies in the campaign, which I argue to be crucial components of both the national and local Labour campaign. While use of such material has been studied by others (see Issenberg 2013), I show how the agency of this material is not around the language of the material but around the affect of the mass leafletting campaign. The physical materials (leaflets, posters, calling cards) were constructed through Contact Creator’s sister technology, Campaign Creator, a digital database that allows local campaigns to personalise and localise material with national Labour branding. This, alongside the focus on a door-step campaign, allowed a mass distribution of this material that is the concern of my analysis. In the second part of the chapter, I focus on the use of social media by the campaigns. The 2015 general election was expected to see the utilisation of these media by the parties following its use by the successful and influential Obama campaigns of 2008 and 2012. Here, I begin constructing a theorisation of the use of social media and ‘networks’ by the campaign and why the campaign failed to gain much traction within my own social media ‘bubble’. I turn to Lingdren’s (2015) theory of ‘Spreadability’ and question how the party attempted to use social media spaces. Thus, I look at the expressions of the party online, the

campaign handbook's guide to their use of social media and the adoption of it by some of the 'language' of social media, specifically the use of 'selfies'.

In my last empirical chapter, I look at the Labour leadership election. When I originally designed the fieldwork the aftermath I was concerned with was the reaction to the election, specifically as to how it unfolded in my own social network. However, the effectiveness of the leadership campaign also become clear within both Labour and my social media bubble. As a result, this chapter looks at some of the affects around the leadership campaign as it unfolded, raising questions about the identity of the party. To help to try and understand the result of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari's (2013a) concept of the 'war machine'³, which pitches an insurgent, rebellious assemblage against those other candidates and MPs in the party, who form the 'State' in this conceptualisation. I argue that the concept of the war machine may contribute to political geography by revealing some of the strengths and power that an 'underdog' or rebellious campaign, such as Corbyn's, has in tackling the state. This concept not only tells us about the attractions to it, but also about how these movements relate to the 'State', as well as some of the struggles that the movement has once it acquires space within the state, or alternatively dies away (Steinberg et al. 2017).

In the final section of this chapter I return to social media and emphasise the relationship many in my social media bubble had with the Corbyn campaign. Building on the theorisation of 'bubbles', 'third space' by Wright (2012) and Graham et al. (2016), I find that

³ The 'war machine' is an assemblage not of the State that is at war with the State. It has been variously theorized, and Deuchars (2011: n.a.) argues that a war machine could potentially be anything that challenges the status quo: 'many social forms can constitute the war machine. They can take the form of artistic movements all the way to revolutionary movements'.

Facebook is not just another discursive conversation space but also an active agent in the construction of a style conversation through the sharing of information and ‘liking’ of it. By placing the reaction to the leadership result in contrast to that of the general election campaign, we can witness a different territorialisation of a variety of different people within and outside the party. This chapter, then, continues my argument about the performance of the party, both by those inside it and – through this bubble – those outside it.

In the concluding chapter, I explore my findings through an alternative, more esoteric conception of abstract machines than the one in the empirical chapters. That is post-anarchist Saul Newman’s (2009: n.a.) more metaphysical approach that “rules” through more minute institutions and practices of domination’ than the ‘deliberate plan’ of Buchanan (2015: 385). I argue that Newman’s approach lands us in ground not too far away from Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. I also explore my findings through the concept that the State wishes to produce arborescent structures (‘or tree, also referred to as root’ (Grossberg 2014: 5)), mostly interested in self-preservation, while the war machine embraces the rhizomatic potential which is a more chaotic but exciting potential – ‘the best and worst: potato and couch grass or the weed’, as Deleuze and Guattari write (2013a: 5) – that can change the State in unexpected ways. Patton (2000: 16-17) explains that, ‘[a]gainst the arborescent image which has been prevalent in the history of philosophy [Deleuze and Guattari] propose a rhizomatic image of thought in which concepts are not stable but in a state of constant flux as they are modified or transformed in the passage from one problem to the next.’ Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 5) enthuse that ‘any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be.’ Thus, we have two images, one of the arborescent tree/root where things branch off from a centre; another of the rhizomatic chaotic root, that can grow anywhere, without a centre. Following this, I explore how the

concept of the war machine argues that it will be eventually swallowed up and changed by the State (whilst potentially also changing the State), and thus it presents a negative prediction of Corbyn's leadership. Finally, while I have begun to address some questions, this thesis provides some tentative steps in considering what a different approach can tell us about political parties and their relationship with the State and society.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I will first explore the current theorisations of political parties and their relationship with society in geography and the social sciences. Second, I will look at the potentials of looking at political parties and elections through assemblage and affect. Acuto and Curtis (2014: 9-10) have argued that '[a]ssemblage, as an empirical approach, calls upon us to confront unproblematic categories [...] and pull them apart into the components of their assembled wholes.' It is my contention that political geography (with electoral geography as a sub-field) has thus far understood the party and the electorate as two distinctive and abstract elements of an election, and by contrast assemblage views the world as fundamentally interrelated, making these two groups much more complex. This will provide a peopled and material understanding of the relationship between P- (State) and p- (everyday) politics, as well as of the affective conditions and results of elections and campaigns that influence the election themselves and the aftermath.

The issue that I wish to highlight in the first half of this chapter is how these theorisations 'overcode' society and parties. By this, I mean the process of producing 'overriding [...] heterogeneous codes in order to produce a unified substance' (Bonta and Protevi 2004: 122). As such, in much electoral geography, the State is treated as something inevitable. Bonta and Protevi (2004: 122) define 'a State' as 'the overcoding of territorial societies.' Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 264) suggest that overcoding produces 'segments' with 'power centres', such as governments: 'what power centres govern are the assemblages that effectuate that abstract machine.' To explain this, here I use Grossberg's (2014: 10) definition of the 'abstract machine' as 'a map that realises itself in the production

of the real; it directs the creative emergence of the actual akin to how we might think about the laws of geometry as “producing” or “causing” the very shapes they describe.’⁴ Coding a space *as* Britain downplays the heterogeneity of societies and cultures found within, these ‘codes’ become an abstract used to evoke one thing whilst holding back the depth of complexity and performance. Electoral geography is heavy in codes, and by looking at the everyday experience of an event of an election campaign, we may be able to claim back some heterogeneity.

First, I will explore the effect of electoral geography’s dependence on statistics through focusing on codes around political parties and then, society. I argue that electoral geographers do not sufficiently question their concepts, thus abstracting relations and voting and hiding the lived experience. This allows for straightforward understandings between parties and societies and elections despite the myriad complex tools that electoral geographers use. Then I consider two major themes that place political parties with particular frameworks within wider political geography – post-politics and governmentality. I argue that post-politics misses an important issue: while it may have proved powerful in its understanding of some State politics as little more than fights around management of neoliberalism, how these politics try to reaffirm and legitimise themselves (and the State) remains relevant. Moreover, the post-political position is both narrowly focused on the West and even there has continued to lose ground since 2008. In contrast, governmentality has opened a door to comprehending power relations between organisational bodies and

⁴ This ‘abstract machine’ is opposed to Buchanan’s (2015: 385) ‘deliberate realization of a distinct plan’ that will be utilized in the empirical chapters; and Newman’s (2009: n.a.) approach, which is about internalizing the order one is in, is briefly explored in the conclusion.

society but perhaps not widely enough. The use of the concept of governmentality has neglected the role of political parties as part of the maintenance of the State. I will then look at different theories of political parties developed by Weber and Gramsci, finding them both still useful and potent, yet leading to reading cleavages into everything. Finally, I discuss the work of some current political sociologists (Mudge and Chen 2014; De Leon 2014; De Leon et al. 2009) and political scientists (Rye 2014). I demonstrate that there is a tendency to overcode political parties, obscuring their composition as a multiplicity of embodied, material and virtual assemblages.

In the second half of the chapter, I present the basis of my theorisation of parties through assemblage and affect, drawing particularly (but not exclusively) from Buchanan (2016), DeLanda (2006, 2013) and Colebrook (2002, 2008). I then offer my precautions and concerns about the use of assemblages. In my critique of electoral and political geography, and in theorising political parties through assemblage and affect, I am building on Nelson's (2006: 371) argument that the 'map of electoral results [...] obscures the political-cultural ripple effects [...] the lived and embodied experiences [...] and the elections themselves'. By looking at, and participating in how parties and campaigns unfold towards, and live on after the election, I am trying to go beyond maps and statistics towards the experiences that create them. In other words, we can understand politics as a cultural and social expression, rather than as a systematic *thing*.

ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY

The mainstay of electoral geography has been the study and mapping of geographic variations of voting patterns. Except in some cases (such as membership numbers), voters'

relationship with parties is expressed through voting. This has resulted in a quantitative-based sub-discipline of political geography that performs one of its central topics (the political party) as an overcoded, mostly disembodied abstract fitted to a coded and cleaved society with seemingly mono-directional relations (for instance, in Johnston and Pattie 2006; Shelley et al. 1990; West 2005).

Criticism of electoral geography's theorisation is not, by any measure, a new thing. The opening two chapters of *Revitalizing Electoral Geography* (Warf and Leib 2011) review what progress has or has not been made since the previous substantive call in *Developments in Electoral Geography* (Johnston et al. 1990), twenty-one years previously. In 1990, electoral geography was accused by some of its best-known practitioners of being infected with 'rampant empiricism' (Shelley et al. 1990: 1) and 'methodical obsession rather than substantive theoretical discussion' (Agnew 1990: 15). Eleven years later, Flint (2001: 302) argued that it remained 'divorced from theoretical innovations' and ten years after that (in 2011), it was described as 'a moribund backwater' by Leib and Quinton (2011: 9), where 'investigations [are] built largely upon a positivistic and liberal epistemological framework'. The problem seemed to be theoretical, as it was somewhere that 'conclusions tended to depend on problematic ideas such as the one-directional flow of power leading from society to state' (West 2005: 501). These calls are portraits of a deep and ongoing dissatisfaction with the sub-field and its approaches. Some have tried to answer these calls, and there has been a small but growing body of literature that has variously adopted post-structuralist (Webster and Leib 2001; Rasmussen 2006; Forest 2004; Nelson 2006), emotional (Schurr 2013), and feminist (McGing 2014) perspectives, as well as assertions that quantitative geography, generally, is aware of its foibles and should not be written off (see Sheppard 2001; Schwanen and Kwan 2009). Despite all this, electoral geographers continue

to conceive society and the political party as separate and overcoded, rendering the multiplicity of lived-experiences such as the relations of politics between political parties, State, society and elections, as incorporeal and lifeless along X and Y-axes.

POLITICAL PARTIES

While there are diverse and changing theories and methodologies in electoral geography, the party continues to be conceived as an actor outside of society, or an addition to it. For instance, Shin and Agnew's (2007) paper on the 'replacement' of the support of *la zona rossa* of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) by the Democratic Party of the Left and the Communist Refoundation party, asserts both parties and voters as lifeless signifiers. The parties are not active within society, and so the coding of PCI is something that can be conceptually replaced in three different ways by the 'replacements': 'substitution', 'splitting', or 'colonizing [...] and mobilizing' (2007: 289). This suggests that it may be possible to simply lay the new parties over the society whose representation has gone astray, that party X will do the same job emotionally and politically, as party Y for the population of voters in question, and that relationship is only ever constituted through the extensive data-set of voting. Neither parties nor society have much dynamism here. Another example is Osei-Kwame and Taylor's (1984: 578) examination of mid-twentieth century Ghanaian elections where parties are the tools of elites having 'degenerated into mere tools for political power' with which to mobilise ethnic groups. The party may never be totally part of its 'base', never an assemblage of multifarious actors who may inhabit multiple spaces and temporal scales: instead, it is only loosely attached to clusters of highly coded electorate. Denied the potential for political parties to be bodied, both they and voters are

lifeless, thus obscuring potentially fluid relations of identity for politicians, activists and (non-) voters.

The issue is not that electoral geographers have failed to notice that political parties are bodied by people in society, but that parties and society remain conceptually disentangled. Voting becomes a series of linear rationalistic choices. Shin's (2001) paper on *la zona rossa* hints at how left wing political parties may be understood as territorialising and coding those societies, but he does not conceptualise them as such. For Shin, the party maintains contact with the electorate through 'local festivals [...] youth groups [... publishing a] daily paper' (Shin 2001: 331), and meetings. Here, a party is always coming to meet society, but is never part of it. Both society and political parties are distinct groups. At what point do those in society people parties?

When parties are embodied, there is a tendency to give all agency to a singular being such as Berlusconi (Shin and Agnew 2007) or Lega Nord's Giancarlo Gentilini (Bialasiewicz 2006). These personalities become central and causal and no attention is paid to the relationships and materials empowering them. Page and Dittmer (2015: 252) argue that '[t]his parallels the concept of body politic, in which the sovereign's body comes to stand in for the whole party,' highlighting that in many studies, '[p]olitical parties are frequently taken to be markers for the totality of the left or right options within a state'. As such, parties and voters may react to distinct issues in distinct social, economic and political contexts, but the party's apparatus and potentials belong solely to the logic of the State.

When electoral geographers have placed the (somehow separable) contextual analysis of the social, political and environmental issues at the core, the campaign and elections are suggested to have rationalistic, clear results thus 'parties relate to voters by reacting to distinctive problems in distinct social, economic and political scenes, which are

treated as separable' (Page and Dittmer 2015: 252). As such, Flint's (2001) world systems' analysis of the German Nazi party in the elections of the late 1920s, views Nazis as a rational option presenting solutions to the economic woes. This lacks an investigation of the affective violence and brutality of Nazi's in their intimidation tactics, street battles, beer hall mentality and experience of World War I that a historian such as Hobsbawm (1995) points towards. It also negates the fact that the Nazis were never elected into power, but invited in (Hobsbawm 1995). Instead, Flint situates voters in a contained context (in this case, the economy) just as a party tries to curry favour, suggesting that the voter may rationally 'weigh and evaluate personal interests, group interests and political information' (Shin 2001: 343). Weaver (2014: 1), too, presents rational choice theory at the heart of representational democracy by asserting that 'a citizen will cast a ballot at an election only if the personal benefits of doing so outweigh the costs'. Or, another take on rational choice theory is where economists Edlin et al. (2007) turn it on its head by arguing both voting and not voting is rational, but selfish voting is less rational as voting for the general good is in the interest for them-and-theirs.

By contrast, neuroscientist Westen (2007) finds these conclusions contrary to current research, noting the long-observed role of emotions and loyalties is a predictor of ballot choice. This suggests that rationalism's role is at least intrinsically complicated by unavoidable affects and emotions. I would add that any use of contextual factors such as economic, must be interlinked and complicated by social and political factors.

To become involved in the party directly is to be conceptually removed from society. Johnston and Pattie (2006: 2-3) write that the party is two things: 'a group of elected members committed to an agreed legislative set within an established political (ideological) framework [... and] a similar, though much larger collection of individuals who support its

ideals and programmes'. They do not venture further than this: politics becomes an extra-curricular activity to society where the membership of a party are always distinct from its leadership. While a society may support a party, it does not play a role in maintaining the party and the party is not of society: to become part of the party removes the person from society. I argue that this is not born out by experience. Parties and society are both heterogeneous and bodied by the same people. It is not just that 'political and economic sectionalism cannot be studied and evaluated independently' (Shelley 1988: 153), it is that they are *interdependent*. They are part of the same amorphous, changing, open whole. Finally, it is worth noting that 'the party' or 'parties' in this context have been treated as a noun, in and of itself which is ahistorical and disembodied.

SOCIETY

If the party is disembodied, the voters are frequently lifeless and without agency. The influential theory of cleavages has been key for many in explaining how some areas continue to vote the same way over time (see Taylor 1990; Johnston 2005; West 2005). Set out by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), it stipulates that cleavages have been hacked into society, so places become aligned to what Whitefield (2002: 181) writes are 'strongly structured and persistent lines of salient social and ideological division among political important actors'. West (2005: 502) says this stipulates that 'different geographical and historical experiences will produce different lines of cleavage'. De Leon et al. (2009: 196) has criticised the theory for creating the party outside the cleavages: in this, cleavages are "'natural" processes that occur outside Party formation, and prior to it'. Parties relate to society, but in a topographical sense and not a dynamic topological one. Written in the late 1960s, Lipset

and Rokkan were attempting to understand how what they perceived as ‘stable *systems*’ (1967: 35) came about. I find this theory hides much of the detail of the experience of people within, and to a party, and the relationship to that system generally. Moreover, change seemingly is only noticed when votes change: a neighbourhood stays cleaved one way until a transformative election. Ó Tuathail (1998: 84) argues that this reduces the ‘discursive politics of elections [...] to a battle between models of electoral cleavages’. Thus, the relationship between party and society is unexplored as the cleavages are defined by polls and surveys, and so, argue De Leon et al (2009: 195), ‘parties are generated by and reflect the principal cleavages in a given society [...] assum[ing] that party systems are shaped by the distribution of voters along a community’s ideology spectrum.’ I would add that cleavages are prone to overcoding populations and do not try to access the experience of the becoming of an area that becomes coded to one party or another.

The idea of the neighbourhood effect has also been popular in electoral geography (see Flint 2001; Weaver 2014). It codes the voter into their neighbourhood, which leans on them to vote in one way or another and so reaffirm and continue whatever cleavage the neighbourhood is part of (Parker 1982; Johnston et al. 2004; Westinen 2014). Westinen (2014: 124) set out that ‘local homogeneity encourages support for the dominant party while local heterogeneity discourages it and leads to political heterogeneity. People belonging to a certain social group are more likely to choose one party over another’. This presumes areas that are homogeneous are ‘safe seats’, as well as demonstrating certain predictable lifestyles and thus the neighbourhood effect takes individuals to be ‘mere products of the society in which they are born’ (DeLanda 2006: 5), or into which they move. Kwan (2012: 966) has criticised this theory as constructing places as ‘static concepts’ that are not attentive to temporal variations, and argues that individuals ‘tie together different

spatial scales through their daily activities, movements and social interactions. The interconnections among individuals and places are vastly complex and vibrantly dynamic, and they should be conceptualised and examined as such'. I advance the notion that assemblage places contexts as crucial to relations but also that contexts are always-becoming: their relations (re)make them continuously. It also brings issues of materials and virtuals to the fore, elements that move relations, and thus contexts, beyond merely the immediate human: what of the campaign material and the spaces these materials are conceived in and then delivered to and how do they get there?

I conceive these conceptions of political parties and society as part of an abstraction that performs and asserts the rational voter and the representative democracy. Electoral geography, the major contribution of literature on the party in political geography, presents the election as an action where the voter is a socially cleaved, highly coded figure that votes for a symbol of his/her cleaved identity. Neither the voter nor the party is capable of autonomy or agency: they are effectively dead entities that occasionally make rationalised choices. The statisticians count their codes and voting cast, and therefore they exist, rendering those statistics real when published. Johal et al. (2014: n.a.) link this to the performance of the reality of the State, and argue that such frameworks help 'to perform that patch of territory we call the UK as a social and economic reality. Rolled into a narrative [...] "the UK" becomes something that we can relate to and retell [...] alternative ways of framing collectives are left out in the cold.' The repeated acts of mapping, survey, polling and abstracting statistics perform the rational voter and his or her representative democratic choices as valid, and present a cohesive nation in place of the difficult, erratic, more-than-rational reality. I take this to mean that the repetition of these practices and the unquestioning attitude towards parties and state means that when they are called forth, or

practiced, no attention is paid to the differences. These concepts are overcoded. Utilised by parties, campaigns, states, and the media, these abstractions become part of the same 'project' to create an abstract legitimisation of the state. But, as Stuart Hall said, '[y]ou can't work out immediately what people think and what politics they have simply by looking at their socio-economic position' (as quoted by Derbyshire 2012, n.a). The continued use of these overcodings prevents the experience of the people, materials and virtuals of the campaign, the vote and the election result from being investigated. Page and Dittmer (2015: 251, *their italics*) have argued that '[e]lectoral geography need no longer draw a line around politics, but instead [can] ask *in what ways* is the state *rendered* relevant to individuals through political parties, and how are parties embroiled in a politics of everyday life?' I argue that to understand the role political parties play in everyday life it is necessary to question the relationship between them and society. Understanding the (re)creation of, and partaking in (or not), of representative democracy as a (in the words of Thrift and Dewsbury [2000: 427]) 'performance allows us to treat space as an active operator, rather than a passive sign standing for something else.' In turn, I argue that assemblage and affect present us with an ontology that suggests the relations within a population and parties (of it) are more fluid than these electoral geography theories have thus far allowed.

CURRENT POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

In political and human geography, the qualitative turn has gone from strength to strength producing a rich body of work on both big P- (State) and little p- (everyday) politics (see Flint 2003). And yet, embodied political parties have seldom been featured and it is perhaps not that surprising that they and their elections left much of the conversation of 'political'

academia by the end of the twentieth century. In the context of the focus and theorisation of neoliberalism, this was understandable as the free market was ensconced at the centre of Western States from the late 1970s and enforced on many others through various means, and so a different social science focus was necessary to study it.

‘Post-politics’ is a recent framing of the issue posited by Swyngedouw (2010, 2011), who argues that the discourses by the dominant political party appear to dissolve into a bitter argument about the management of a reduced State. A party’s focus is on how best to enable the market and little else. In a different if related way, this retreat of politicians and State-interference is mirrored by those following post-structuralist theories, particularly Foucault’s theory of ‘governmentality’ (‘the conduct of conduct’) in geography, which has focused on power relations and theorises a lack of power inherent within the State (Keucheyan 2014). While I see the roots of such analysis in the works of Gramsci, the focus on how power is de-centred mirrors the neoliberal policies dismantling States and the universalist logics that underpinned them. As the neoliberals sank their teeth in, and politics was divorced from, economics (as argued by Varoufakis 2015), the major parties became little more than camps vying to manage the remaining titbits to be handed out. Just as an electoral geographer’s list of coded variables grew, so too did ‘secondary fronts’ (Keucheyan 2014: 49). Class became somewhat usurped as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability became rallying points. It is my contention that this ‘political-intellectual left’ (Agnew 1996: 130) has neglected potentially revealing relations between events and actors in the performance of representative democracies. Neglected too has been how the practices and relationship between parties and voters are made manifest or the myriad relations that maintain a party and the leadership. As such, questions and issues around how the campaign affects people in a multiplicity of ways, relating them or distancing them

from the representative options available and how these change the election result and how that is performed, go unasked.

The literature of post-politics has asserted that parties are of no use or interest at all as they do not possess any real influence or independence. And, certainly, it is hard to argue that the major parties that adopted neoliberalism offered anything of real difference from one another, puppets subsumed by the market. Swyngedouw (2010, 2011) argues that in many representative democracies, neoliberalism has depoliticised the economy and now politicians are in bed with the corporations and all that is left is choice of lifestyle for the citizen, dependent upon it being affordable and thus buyable. Only a 'façade of representative democracy' remains, a politics of non-choice operating at a distance from society: 'the rise of more autocratic forms of governing signal a reordering of the state-civil society nexus, whereby the state operates increasingly "at a distance" [...] organising "the conduct of conduct"' (Swyngedouw 2011: 372). I argue that post-politics somewhat overcodes a neoliberal State where democracy no longer happens. The State is an amorphous dictator, somewhere 'up there', separate from society and alongside markets and other institutions it holds power in the on-going formation of society.

Featherstone and Korf (2012) argue that the idea of post-politics is a relatively limited notion of what 'political' means. Post-politics forgets that outside the West, State party politics are still very much an issue alongside the alter-globalisation movement that exists within the West, as well as elsewhere. They highlight the struggles that pass 'often beyond the radar of international media', citing continuing Maoist insurrection in India and 'Gas Wars' in Bolivia (Featherstone and Korf 2012: 666). I would add to this, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, that the contestation over politics and economics is becoming apparent elsewhere – one only need glance at Greece's (once) self-confessed

‘erratic Marxist’ finance minister Varoufakis (2015), or at the potential of Spain’s Podemos party, who are influenced by Ernesto Laclau’s ideas of useful populism (see Hancox 2015), or, indeed, at Labour’s Shadow Chancellor’s claim that they had fought and won against the discourse of austerity (McDonnell 2016).

In contrast to post-politics, governmentality pulls the practice of the State to earth and has made leeway in bringing big P- and small p- politics together. It is here that we find the removal of direct government control. Governmentality focuses more on cooperation than coercion: it is said by Rose et al. (2006: 1) to be ‘understood in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour’. It focuses on where governing is ‘something that goes on whenever individuals and groups seek to shape their own conduct or the conduct of others (e.g. families, workplaces, schools, etc.)’ (Walters 2012: 11). Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 983), for instance, illuminate how ideas of the ‘vertical state’ are enforced and reinforced through everyday experiences ‘in the routinized practices of State bureaucracies’. However, issues arise with its theorisation, which is perhaps being focused on how the techniques work rather than when they do not. Painter (2006: 763), for instance, argues that governmentality ‘focuses particularly on what Bakhtin calls “authoritative discourse” which tends to be monological’ and is inattentive to ‘the unsystematic, the indeterminate and the unintended.’ Walters (2012: 74), too, finds that governmentality has been fairly criticised for some of its uses that make ‘governance appear overly coherent, univocal and rational.’

By contrast, Painter argues that the experience of the State is not ‘monological’ and ‘top-down’, but ‘rather, a set of practices enacted through relationships between people, places and institutions’ (Painter 2006: 764). To this I would add a large regulatory, usually ignored factor (in the literature) in how people relate to these practices are the everyday

social relations between people and people and people and things, coming from an anarchistic understanding of 'society to be a self-regulating order' (Marshall 2008: 12). In other words, I mean people's actions and ideas are not only controlled and formed by top-down processes but also by social ones that are not part of any formal (and perhaps informal) power structure or intention, and these learnt practices are not necessarily strictly kept to one place or another. We may take different behaviours to different spaces. In the words of Ward (2008: 49), 'there is an order imposed by terror, there is an order enforced by bureaucracy (with the policeman in the corridor) and there is an order in which we are gregarious animals capable of shaping our own destiny.' We might be seeing a return of agency to materials in the current turn of human geography, but we also might return agency to humans, as well. Following this, as State, parties and society are necessarily peopled, and material when combined with assemblage ontology I argue, means that there is no clear-cut distinction between those who compose State and society and by extension, the party.

I posit that social groups and individuals, alongside political parties and the multifarious materials and practices of State and civil servants and others, heavily influence how the State is manifested and how society is becoming. This is not a one-way process but part of a complex, always-becoming, intermingled world. The representative democratic process is an important part of these practices, making both the State and parties at once material and metaphysical, part of the everyday politics as well as of State politics.

Woodward (2014: 23) finds the very idea of the State to be a most important aspect of the day-to-day, pointing out that although we theorised '[s]tates [as] detached from the world, [they] seem to possess the power to affect it'.

I thus offer the argument that parties are part of the performance of this imagined, shared State, but simultaneously they are performed as separate from society. In a performance of overcoding, members seem to be outside the population, or removed from it. In actuality, they bridge the gap between big P- and little p- politics within themselves and wide society. Internally they assert techniques of discipline and homogenisation on their own members that may make them seem removed. But these practices sit alongside how people have learnt to be social in other spaces. For instance, while there is acknowledged internal diversity of Labour, it nevertheless has a tradition that keeps members of the Labour party married to one another and not joining with others. Pearmain (2011: 219) writes that 'Labour may be a "broad church," but it is peculiarly enclosed and separatist, almost a mass sect, and has never embraced electoral ecumenism.' As such, parties are social and material entities (assemblages) themselves, made up of different assemblages that come together in different spaces – to campaign, vote in the Commons, in the Lords, to socialise, and so on. It is my argument that those people that occupy the space of 'Labour' are also parts of other assemblages and social worlds. Members of political parties are necessarily interwoven with society at large – they share people with other assemblages and are simultaneously deeply entwined with the running, maintenance and performance of the State. This is beyond questions of big and little p- politics and towards questioning and investigating the complex ways in which they are enmeshed, undermining ideas of both parties and States being 'up there' and society only being subject to their measures.

THEORIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

Two of the most influential strands of theorisation of political parties thus far, have been those from a Marxist and a Weberian perspective. These theories have sometimes influenced how parties are actually performed (specifically Marxism in Communist parties, but also the New Labour project was influenced by Gramsci [Seymour 2015] and its 'architect' Philip Gould's 'quest for simplicity' was influenced by Lenin [Pearmain 2011: 224]). At their start, the studies of sociology and political science were premised on political modernity and political parties were understood to be at the centre of them. Mudge and Chen (2014: 306) comment that 'parties were indigenous to industrial capitalism and oriented towards state control [...] attending to its dynamic interrelationship with state and society'. These same theories laid important ground for the post-modern, anti-universalist, anti-party theories that have coloured so much social science since the 1970s and 1980s. First, I will set out the Weberian perspective, and second, a broad overview of Marxist Gramscian understandings of parties. I argue that while there is still much use to be found in these theories (particularly from Gramsci) they both produce their own variations of cleavages, and do not investigate politics through a detailed experience, leaving the becoming of parties absent. In the final part, I will focus on recent reflections and research in sociology and political science, drawing on De Leon (2014), De Leon et al. (2009), Mudge and Chen (2014), and Rye (2014) who are also attempting to refocus on parties.

WEBER

Although conceptually different from one another, **both** Gramscian and Weberian theory perform a divorce of parties from society. For both, bureaucratization is a foible that parties

fall into in time, but Weber's overcoding is perhaps more terminal. Political parties are central to Weber's idea of the large modern democracy. While smaller communities may be able to be leaderless, due to the size of the 'complex modern states [...] there have to be rulers' (Shaw 2008: 35). Weber's concept of the party is quite vague:

[They] reside in the sphere of power. Their action is orientated toward the acquisition of social power [...] no matter what its context may be. In principle, parties may exist in a social club as well as in a state [...] Parties are [...] only possible within groups that have an associational character [...] some rational order and a staff of persons available who are ready to enforce it. For parties aim precisely at influencing this staff, and if possible, to recruit from it party members. (Weber 1978: 938)

Low (2007: 2653-4) writes that for Weber, '[p]arties [...] might be in a sense constitutive of modern democracy because of [the] loss of religious or philosophical capacity to ground politics in unitary shared, normative worldviews. Partisans, and partisan organisations [...] [are] central to democracy and modernity.' In other words, there is a competition for dominance in the State and for the modern political party the aim is control of that State. That is its *raison d'être*. However, in seeking this, political parties become subservient to the State logic, removing them from society-at-large and 'tending to become less and less representative of the mass public and part of an essentially conservative bureaucratic affair', so 'Parliamentary politics are party-led and citizens are largely "politically passive" consumers of programs and agendas' (Mudge and Chen 2014: 309). Representative democracy works through a rational-legal 'legitimisation' and (similarly to Gramsci) involves people's 'voluntary submission' to rulers (Shaw 2008: 35). The line drawn between parties and society is quite clear here.

Determining the rational-logic concept of the (large) modern democratic State is an example of what DeLanda (2006: 12) has criticised many theories: making functions 'logically necessary' rather than 'contingently obligatory'. In Weberian theory, political

parties come about because there is an assumed logical necessity for them rather than their chaotic evolution within a State. The DeLandan assemblage perspective would argue differently, that parties function how they do, not because they are logical, but because that is how that State has evolved. As such, Weber's concept is insistent on a State and does not question it at all. The ability of the party to be divorced from society in the first place suggests a party apparatus that becomes removed from society once it finds its organisational focus. It is thus placed somewhere outside society and the State floats above, absorbing anything that becomes too big for a large society to manage without dictators: 'In the contemporary "state" [...] the "separation" of the administrative staff [...] and of the workers from the material means of administrative organization, is completed' (Weber n.a. as quoted by Shaw 2008: 35). Parties are thus cut off from society.

MARXISM

Gramsci is credited as giving the first substantial Marxist theory of the political - the mass political party specifically - and its limits. For Gramsci, politics was 'the central human activity, the means by which the single consciousness is brought into contact with the social and natural world in all its forms' (Gramsci n.a. as quoted by Hobsbawm 1977: 208). I argue that Gramsci's theory of hegemony still remains crucial to understanding party political discourses and the role political parties play in the maintenance of the State, as well as in society. Unlike Foucault, Gramscian analysis asserts the role of the State as a focus of power.

Broadly, his theory of hegemony stipulates that every political system has its own constantly shifting balance of cooperation and violence. The elites rule other groups

through cooperation and they embrace of some of their concerns within the State: the violence (or threat) of the State is used as reaction to a threat that is too far outside the elite's willingness to compromise. Problematically, this has frequently been taken to mean simply a material cooperation, that people and groups consciously consent or challenge the hegemon.

The theory is subtler than that. For Gramsci, culture, politics and economics are interlinked, Jones (2006: 33) argues that he 'awards much greater significance to ideas than to cultural institutions' than is generally accredited. For instance, Gramsci (1999: 343) developed a theory of 'common sense', where by an individual's understanding of the world is 'fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is.' Jones (2006: 9) writes that someone's 'common sense' is a 'confused formation, part drawn from "official" conceptions of the world [...] in part formed out of people's practical experiences'. This conceptualisation places ideas at the forefront of curating material conditions. For example, part of what held back other countries from the Marxist revolution, and what pushed the Italian State towards Fascism and the Russian State towards Communism was how different ideas had taken hold in those States:

The most favourable conditions for the proletariat revolution do not necessarily always occur in those countries where capitalism and industry have reached the highest level of development, but may arise where the fabric of the capitalist system offers least resistance, because of its structural weakness, to an attack by the revolutionary class and its allies (Gramsci 1999: 145).

He argues that the power of the idea of capitalism in Russia was not strong enough to counteract the revolutionary forces, and in Italy, Fascism melded with the 'programme of conservation and reaction which has always dominated Italian politics' (Gramsci 1999: 145). This created a bloc out of the 'ruling class' and the 'urban petty bourgeoisie and [...] a new

rural bourgeoisie', whose policies divided and conquered the revolutionary potential of the peasants and workers. This stipulates that political power does not simply rest on the idea that if a party with a particular ideology were to win an election it would automatically change the country to reflect their ideology, but that the party's internal culture is absolutely crucial to creating the eventual transformation. Without a mass culture that fits with its ideology prior to its coming to power, the party can only maintain power through violence, rather than violence *and* cooperation. The relations of, and ideas that circulate in, society shape how that society conceives things and functions. Social and cultural elements are central to Gramscian politics since a new communist culture enabled by the party itself is supposed to be the breeding ground for communism – 'the state in gestation', as described by Mudge and Chen (2014: 308). Thus, culture and ideas are central to the manifest reality of the party and the State – the monopoly of violence alone does not equate to hegemony.

For many British Communists of the latter half of the twentieth century, as well as some Labour supporters, Gramsci's theory provided a base for a substantial critique of the Labour Party's failings to usher forth a socialist State. Some felt the party was enslaved to capital and establishment culture (the real hegemon). Ralph Miliband (father of Ed Miliband, leader of the party 2010-2015) argued that the Labour Party's revolutionary potential was always subsumed by a parliamentarianism that was inherently culturally conservative. Consequently, it has been argued (Coates and Pantich 2003; Blackledge 2011; Robinson 2012) that the Labour party was always for Labourism⁵, rather than socialism.

⁵ Defined by Ralph Miliband as 'an ideology of social reform, within the framework of capitalism, with no serious ambition of transcending that framework' [as quoted by Blackledge 2011, n.a.]

Through this, it was conceived that the party is not the same thing as class (its 'cleavage' in society), nor simply a reflection of it (nor any other cleavage), but as Gramsci had argued – autonomous, capable of its own mistakes.

Gramsci saw the potential creation of social cleavages everywhere. While a party could form a society in itself, by becoming part of a party, an individual could remove themselves from society, and through time this could become a cleavage: a 'society in gestation' away from society-at-large. The danger was that cleavages would become stabilised through bureaucratization thus removing political parties from attending to society (politics) and instead leaving them focused on their own perpetuation: 'the massive structure of modern democracies, either in terms of state organization or the complexity of associations in civil life [...] constitutes "trenches" and "permanent fortifications" on the front in the war of position' (Gramsci n.a. as quoted by Merrington 1968: 156). Becoming overcoded seems to me a variation of a process of this: parties become immutable and unresponsive to society, and both become homogenised – the metaphysical divorce between those in the party and those in society. And, indeed, Deleuze and Guattari write that the State is invested in the conservation of itself (2013a: 418).

However, I would argue that the Gramscian idea of bureaucratization is something of a false dichotomy that creates the illusion of divorce rather than the fact, and is thus inattentive to the small p- (everyday) political experience. Assemblage and affect, by contrast, are concepts that draw our attention to how the small p- and big P- are entwined. Nonetheless, Gramsci's theory of hegemony and power remains a powerful and important building block in understanding political power and discourse. It has been adapted and re-adapted variously by post-Marxists (influentially by Laclau and Mouffe 2001), an anarchist (Purcell 2012), and environmental and development geographers (Ekers et al. 2012). While

Pearmain's (2011) Gramscian analysis of New Labour has been influential in my understanding of the political positioning of the Labour leadership, Gramscian ideas do not play directly into my resulting analysis.

I maintain that Gramsci's ideas of the importance of culture and ideas, as well as Weber's thoughts on the relationship between society, party and State, are not so far away from the post-structuralist and post-political ideas that have tended to dominate social theory recently and are still of much interest and use. It is necessary to acknowledge and understand both theorists as they are involved in the background and form two major strains of thought that preceded the post-structuralist turn, as well as informing much of the literature on political parties. Post-structuralists such as Foucault untied social science from the rigidity of universalisms, of overcoding, and of the power of State to which followers of Marx and Weber can be prone. These enable a view of society as consistently changing and evolving and not subject to any universal logic and roles, or overcoding.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCE

I cannot pretend to be alone in trying to investigate anew the gap in the understanding of the relationships between parties, society and State. However, while I agree with many of their arguments, I differ from my fellow travellers in how to move forward. Sociologists De Leon et al. (2009) have found that their field of political sociology largely accepted the role of cleavages and rational choice theory and left the study of political parties to political science. Their work, alongside Mudge and Chen (2014), suggests that such a divorce is just starting to be addressed. I side with their mission to reinsert the party into studies of the State's relationship with society: 'in practice, parties stand in fluid continuum with the State

and civil society, such that it is sometimes difficult to discern where one of these three entities begin and another ends' (De Leon 2014: 2). Parties are crucial and unique parts of the representative democratic State:

[They] are distinct from these other entities because of their control of the system of nominations, elections, and appointments to political office [...] They preside [...] over the formal institutional machinery that many of us associate with the democratic process [...] assume the reins of state power [...] direct foreign and domestic policy of their respective communities [...] and they] have been key players in the most significant and painful social transformations of our times' (De Leon 2014: 1).

De Leon's analysis above may be more US-centric, putting perhaps too much actual power into the hands of political parties. For instance, in a state such as the UK, we must consider the role of civil servants. More generally, we should also continue to pay attention to the relations politics holds with commerce and other (non-political) parties. The role of a political party is perhaps distinct but they do not simply 'preside [...] over the formal institutional machinery' (De Leon 2014: 1), and I argue that they also body and materialize the link between society and State. Mudge and Chen (2014: 319) posit that 'parties [...] are key agents in the production of shared meanings and the construction of stable institutions.' I question what they mean by shared meanings: between who, where? If it is within society then part of the role of the political party is not only the production of shared meanings, but a continued contestation *of* that meaning. As such, we might look at the changing role the State has in the everyday, depending on the ideology of a party.

My conceptualization of these shared meanings: places, spaces, people and technology, is that the relations between the four, is central. Performing political party campaigns can be understood as part of the performance and traditions of State, partially performing and making real that imagined community or the idea of shared community in the area in which they are popular.

My biggest issue, however, with Mudge and Chen and De Leon (et al) is that they do not provide much with which to go forward. De Leon (2014) argues that a party is a sort of middleman between societies and state, resembling a delineation of power and that society-party-state have complex relationships but they are not necessarily enmeshed with one another in this conception. I, on the other hand, am theorising that they are enmeshed. Mudge and Chen's desire is to come to grips with parties and society and provide useful questions to be addressed around internal party relationships; the nature of the party's embeddedness within state and society; their relationship with other parts of culture, and so on. And yet, they provide no suggestions for how this is to be done and so no way to provide any answers. Instead, they maintain a reference back to ideas of cleavages and power seeking, stating that 'parties can be primarily expressions of existing cleavages in some cases and times and actively forge political blocs in others' (Mudge and Chen 2014: 322). As noted above, it is my contention that frameworks such as cleavages tend to overcode relations and are thus not that useful in trying to understand lived and embodied relations. Moreover, there is no mention of the material or technological in the work of these political sociologists. Instead, I look towards not only the leadership but the 'grass-roots' of the party, questioning how the party may be constructed through the relations and performances of its components.

Much of political science has been about the inner-workings of politics. As such, De Leon et al. (2009: 134) argue that this is part of a false dichotomy where political sociology has paid attention to social movements, and political science to State politics, thus 'conceal[ing] a key assumption [...] that parties either reflect the preferences of social cleavages of a given society or are reducible to social movements or states of which they are

part.’ However, while this is true, there is at least one political scientist addressing issues of embodying the party and the power relations found within.

Rye (2014) argues that while political parties’ primary purpose is the persistent pursuit of power, not much attention has been paid to the internal pursuits of power. Attentive to both ‘power over’ and ‘power to’, he defines five theorisations of power: individualistic, strategic, administrative, constitutive and disciplinary. While a useful and critical study, I find there is too much emphasis on power and on leadership. It suggests to me an idea that officials of these parties are always attempting a Machiavellian state-of-being. While acknowledging that there is a lot of power play within parties, I follow Nancy (2010) in rejecting the idea that all human relations are power plays and posit that even politicians might enjoy each other’s company once in a while. As such, in Rye’s work there is not enough on the constitution of agency where power stems from, nor what else happens in party organisations apart from power plays. By only looking at power, one does so at the expense of other relations. I argue that placing power at the centre of all relations may mean one only ever understands relationships *as* power relations, rather than relations that are potentially social, and self-serving – ends, in and of, themselves. Lastly, while he peoples the parliamentary party, Rye maintains the split between society and party, as well as not exploring the agency of materials and virtuals.

Thus, while there is still much to gain from the prior literature, there is still much to seek out. I maintain that since society, political parties and the State are manifested through people, materials, and virtuals, there can be no clear delineation between any one of them from another. In this, I am attempting to address Megoran’s concerns that the

[D]efinitions of the political that concentrate on discourse and representation risk underestimating or ignoring the role that the state continues to play in the everyday lives of its own and other citizens [...] a study of a state must involve an examination

of how it is experienced in everyday life, as well as discursive representational practice. Nations and states, and their institutions, are composed of people who cannot and should not be reduced to the images which are constructed about them. (Megoran 2006: 627)

I do not conceive assemblage as a final answer or wish to use it 'purely', but I find that it asks different questions and has much potential to illuminate previously attenuated things, such as how people become involved in parties, what parties actually are, what the struggles of territorialising and coding are and how they relate to other assemblages, and so on. In the next section, I argue that assemblage theory can be used to address the problems I have raised above by focusing on how the world is made through interrelated subjects, materials and virtuals.

ASSEMBLAGE

Every conceptualisation of assemblage theory is something of a unique assemblage itself since the writings of Deleuze and Guattari are (arguably intentionally) difficult to follow. Colebrook (2002: 1) tells us that for Deleuze at least 'the power of life [...] was its power to develop problems', and as such, their stylistic approach seems partly to be about setting their interpreters a 'problem' and they have been answered in diverse ways. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari never really developed a single lexicon. Terms seem to change in relation to the subject, or the point in their career, with Legg (2011: 129) observing that 'assemblage theory is itself a heterogeneous and diverse collection of writings.' We have already seen how 'machines' and 'assemblage' can be taken to mean the same thing, the former from *Anti-Oedipus* (2013b), the latter from *A Thousand Plateaus* (2013a). Buchanan (2015: 382-3) has highlighted the issue of the fragility of many (English-language) readings, arguing that the influential translation by Massumi of the French '*agencement*' as

assemblage has led to a core issue in its use: '*agencement* is Deleuze and Guattari's own translation [...] of the German word *Komplex* [...] the term assemblage has been taken at face value, as though the concept was somehow self-explanatory', going onto argue that 'arrangement' reflects the intentions of *agencement* more.

Considering the above, I feel it is pointless to try and be 'pure' to Deleuze and Guattari's writings. After all, I am already reading them in translation and considering the content of the theory, any attempt to have a Cartesian-style overview of Deleuze and Guattari seems to me frankly ridiculous. For my purposes, the concepts of assemblage and affect provide a lens that draws attention to relations, experience, and events. However, I argue that concepts are also something to test, rather than just to apply. My assemblage is built up from a reading of *Anti-Oedipus* (2013b) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (2013a) and their academic followers (particularly Buchanan, Colebrook and DeLanda) who have interpreted their complex, dense and problematic writings. In doing this, I am hoping to find a way to deconstruct the images of power, homogeneity, hierarchy, and inevitabilities of political parties and their supporters, and rebuild an image of political parties and elections as based on events, change, relationships, experience, emotions, virtuals, people and things.

First, I set out my starting point of assemblage theory by providing a single-line definition on which I shall then expand. I build up a lexicon as evolved from others, hoping to express as clearly as possible how I understand the terms. I also explore the concepts through brief examples taken from party political life, mostly focused around elections. I examine the functioning of the assemblage through the Buchanan/Patton interpretation of 'abstract machines' – the 'software program' (Patton 2002: 44) – and the subsequent issue of *how* they function through the concepts of 'becoming,' 'territorialisation' and 'coding'. I then continue onto 'affect', which provides a (perhaps pre-) emotional focus, questioning

actions of discourse and conscious decisions. After that, I look at the issue of intensive time and its role in constructing the experience of an assemblage. Fourth, I outline Beck and Gleyzon's (2017) understanding of the Deleuzian 'event', and follow Colebrook's (2002) interpretation of Deleuze's work in arguing against a focus on the banal and towards a focus on moments which may be 'cut' at. I finish with a concern I have about the usage of non-representational theory in academia so far.

POLITICAL PARTIES AS ASSEMBLAGES

My single-line definition of an assemblage for the purpose of this thesis is that it is *a constantly changing collective body composed of singularities that does something*. It can be composed of a myriad of different things (human, animal, vegetable, mineral, energy, ideas, and so on) that flow in and out of it. For a human-intensive, purposeful assemblage such as a political party, my analysis will question Buchanan's (2015: 385) interpretation that stipulates an assemblage's intended *function* is defined by an 'abstract machine', which he describes as 'the deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan'. This is in contrast to DeLanda's (2006) understanding that the way an assemblage functions is defined by the always-changing relationships that compose it. I do not hold either sacred, but I wish to explore the potential of the 'abstract machine'.

In (intentional) human-led assemblages, it is crucial we look at the plan behind its becoming, otherwise we may miss out on human agency and how different aspects become important and gain agency. However, I propose that the 'abstract machine' is a component of an assemblage and that assemblage does not originate from a singular point, but from the relationships between the different things that make it, Deleuze and Guattari (2013a:

411) writing that they have ‘no intrinsic properties, only situational ones.’ Or as Dittmer (2014b: 387) expounds: ‘while the features of components are important to the resulting assemblage, it is the relationship between the components is that the key [...] what has been termed “relations of exteriority” that make it function as it does.’ Finally, while assemblages do not need to be human-centric or intentional, political parties are, and they are the source of my empirical concern. Colebrook (2002: 81-2, her emphasis) uses the term ‘social machines’ for human-centric assemblages writing that they ‘are *collective* extensions or “assemblages” that extend experience [...] Social machines extend and organise [...] “partial” investments into organised institutions.’

In light of this, I argue that political parties can be understood as assemblages/social machines, as people relate to a campaign that aims to involve them with a party (thus trying to ‘extend and organise [...] “partial” investments’ [Colebrook 2002: 2]). I contend that this perspective benefits our understanding of parties: it removes an essentialism from their definition and highlights both their malleability and (by focusing on singular relationships with it) alerts us to the experiences of interaction with people in and outside the assemblage. An important part of this argument is the issue of the subjectivity of an assemblage as always becoming. There is no ‘essential’ thing of an assemblage, and so, there is not an intrinsic, essential ‘Labour Party’. Rather, the party is in a constant state of change, in its policies, personnel, material presences, and so on. For instance, we can interpret the work of historians Pelling and Reid (1990) on the Labour Party in a way that reveals that its multiplicity of origins, when it was founded in 1900, were based upon relationships between the two parliamentary parties of the time (The Conservatives and the Liberals), internal issues within the Liberals (particularly ‘The Radical Liberals’ faction), the

enfranchisement of the working male population, the trade union movement, and (non-revolutionary) State socialists, and so on.

One of the main roles of the party leadership since has been attempting to assert its desired meaning and role of the Labour Party (its 'code'), both in society and in parliament. Against those socialists within the party who argued that it was a socialist party, we have already looked at how Marxist sociologist Ralph Miliband used Gramsci's theory of hegemony to argue against the idea that Labour could ever be such: it was too in thrall to parliament and minor marginal gains (Coates and Pantich 2003). Robinson (2012) traces how changes of attitude towards nationalization from the 1960s were contested by many within the party as well as society. Pearmain (2011) has powerfully used Gramscian theory to analyse the internal ideological battles of the 1980s and 1990s within the leadership, and the subsequent coming of New Labour, and the loss of a socialist coding of the party. The battles continued into 2015: a rhetoric of 'returning' Labour to being a 'mass movement' (again) was put forward, independently of one another, by both a 'centre-left' position as represented by MP Stella Creasy (Mason 2015) and a Bennite-socialist position as represented by Jeremy Corbyn (Seymour 2016) in their respective deputy leadership and leadership campaigns, both arguing that Labour had lost its way.

When essentialism is disregarded, how the leadership and other groups within the assemblage try to construct the meaning of the party is revealed through a focus on change, difference, and the relationships between the components and other singularities and assemblages. Rather than seeing these components (members, ideas and spaces) as separate, or variations, an assemblage approach can focus on how they continually flux and thus highlight the changing intentions, structures and meaning. The codes put forward by the different leaderships are continually in contestation with the collective membership's

understanding of the party. We can see this in the majority Corbyn received in the 2015 leadership campaign in comparison with his ability to get onto the ballot ticket in the first place (which was controlled by MPs). The causality and emergence of the party and the various stances it has campaigned on are ‘contingently obligatory’, rather than ‘logically necessary’ (DeLanda 2006: 11).

The established lexicon of assemblage describes the flux of assemblages in terms of ‘(de)territorialisation’ and ‘(de)coding’. These terms are taken from Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 47), who wrote that ‘each articulation has a code *and* a territoriality [...] each possess both form and substance’. ‘Codes’ define the formality and, ‘territoriality’ suggests the strength of relationships a component has within the assemblage. Briefly, DeLanda (2006: 15) says ‘territorialisation provides a first articulation of the components, the *coding* [...] supplies a second articulation, consolidating the effects of the first and further stabilising the identity of assemblages’. In the confines of this thesis, we might say that territorialisation is the process of identifying with (or being positively affected by) a party, becoming part of the assemblage – voting for it, liking their social media material, visiting their website, becoming a volunteer, and so on. Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 375, their emphasis) wrote that ‘[w]herever territoriality appears, it establishes an intraspecific *critical distance* between members of the same species’, suggesting that the territorialisation of someone by Labour is a distancing of that person from others who feel differently. Colebrook describes the development of coding, writing that:

Deleuze and Guattari argue that there are systems of inscription (marking or writing) meaning or signification [...] a pre-history of sense, on the emergence of human language and meaning from primitive and bodily relations [...] After this event of assemblage or territorialisation, these marks can be “read” as signs of some general identity. This occurs when one body sets itself outside the tribe and presents itself as representative of a social order, which the marks are now taken to represent [...] The

marks then become signs *of* a belonging that has some external reference point.
(Colebrook 2002: 116)

Thus, a code is used as a marker of identity, such as the ‘codes’ one might use in a survey, or a Labour membership card.

ABSTRACT-MACHINE

To analyse intentional assemblages, it is important to attend to how an organization can function and *do* something despite its constant changing (or ‘becoming’). Some argue that the function of such an assemblage is defined by its ‘abstract machine,’ however, there are many different interpretations of what the abstract machine is. Tampio (2015: 49) says that ‘an abstract machine [is] an incorporeal power that pilots the formation of assemblages [... it] shapes a body’s content and expression,’ and but confuses ‘incorporality’ by borrowing Paul Patton’s metaphor that it is ‘a software program that turns a computer into a calculating or a gaming machine.’ Grossberg (2014: 10) suggests that the abstract machine is ‘a map that realises itself in the production of the real: it directs the creative emergence of the actual akin to how we might think about the laws of geometry as “producing” or “causing” the very shapes they describe.’ Bachanan (2015: 385) insists that an abstract machine is crucial, as an ‘assemblage is purposeful, it is not simply a happenstance collocation of people, materials, and actions, but the deliberate realization of a distinctive abstract machine [...] its components are both known and integral to its existence, not unknown and undecided.’ There is a confusion about whether the abstract machine is ‘incorporeal’ or – as suggested by being a ‘software program’ - ‘distinctive’, thus locatable as a ‘plan’. In this thesis, I wish to test only one of these theories. As such, following the

‘software program’ analogy, I wish to see where this more ‘deliberate’ interpretation may lead us: can we understand the campaign method as designed by the leadership as the abstract machine, instructing the local manifestation of Labour (the leadership, and volunteers) in how to perform the party within an election context? And if so, what use is it to understanding the wider assemblage?

Moreover, as there is no ‘essential’ thing that an assemblage is, the abstract machine must change depending on the challenge facing it. This change is part of the influence of contexts and components. The party is performed differently in each different space. The leadership selection procedure is an example of the process of a de/re-coding the identity of the party. For this, its abstract machine changes: first, in that the leadership changes in the first place, and second, that leadership can also change how the subsequent leadership selection happens. In 2013, a special conference led by Ed Miliband changed the voting system for electing the leadership into one-member-one-vote, seen by many as limiting the power of the (recently left-wing) union voice, who previously had a significant block vote (BBC News 2014b). At the same time, the requirement to vote was broadened away from members to include paid-up ‘supporters’ (essentially paying £3 for a vote). It was also seen as limiting a left-wing voice of the party. Thus, the ‘computer program’ was changed.

While the abstract machine may direct the function, it does not determine its resultant shape or expression(s). Components are constantly changing, coming in and out of the assemblage, and involved in other assemblages. DeLanda (2006, 2013) bases his definition of assemblage on ‘emergence’ and ‘becoming’, describing them as always-becoming ‘open wholes’: ‘open’ because things are always entering and leaving it and it is thus always changing; ‘whole’ since an assemblage functions as it does due to the

components' relations that 'are not logically necessary but only contingently obligatory: a historical result of their close coevolution' (DeLanda 2006: 12). He argues that this is revealed through considering a human body's components (liver, kidneys, spleen) not being designed to work together, but rather working together as they do because they are in the same sack of meat – a co-evolution, rather than an intentional strategy. Buchanan argues that these changing of components does not mean the *function* of the assemblage changes, damning DeLanda's assemblage 'as a new kind of causality, one that acts without conscious intention or purpose' and (misinterpreting DeLanda) stating that 'the assemblage is not the product of an accumulation of individual acts' (Buchanan 2015: 388). DeLanda's argument is more about the result of relations between components, rather than accumulated individual acts. Indeed, the components have little agency by themselves. Buchanan's criticism is not alone, Acuto and Curtis (2014: 5, 6) noting that DeLanda has met 'objections from some Deleuzians as being against the spirit of the original work'. Buchanan's argument also locates agency only within the human-led sphere, whereas DeLanda does not. Perhaps a party's campaign is more of an 'arrangement', enacted with the intentions of humans guiding it and so it makes sense to try and understand the abstract machine.

I find that the difference between the intended function (the abstract machine) and the resulting functioning is perhaps one of the most interesting issues of an assemblage. Going back to the metaphor of a computer program– what happens when that program (mis)loads? Buchanan (2015: 388) accuses DeLanda's interpretation as decreeing assemblage a question of 'how', and by doing so, 'obscures the deeper and most interesting "what" question' because '[w]orrying about *how* a particular structure *actually* changes forgets that the real question[s is ...] *what* is the structure [... and h]ow is it constituted?' Buchanan's (2015: 390) own definition of assemblage is: 'the productive intersection of a

content (actions, people and things) and a form of expression (affects, words and ideas). The form of content and the form of expression are independent of each other - their relationship is one of reciprocal presuppositions'. Whilst I follow Buchanan's argument in focusing on *what* the structure is (or is supposed to be), for me it is contrasting that with the *how* that is of particular interest. It is these differences that create the experience and expressions of that assemblage. In other words, what people are supposed to do and their interpretation of that (and, moreover, what they actually do during a campaign) creates and performs that campaign. It is not the intentioned performance of the assemblage alone that is interesting, nor is it simply the expressions of components and assemblages. It is how they relate to one another. While the leadership may design the campaign and hierarchy, *how* the rest of the party (staff, volunteers, and so on) play out these instructions constructs the emergence of the party. Crucially, this means that the successful functioning of an abstract machine is not necessary to define it as an assemblage.

The question I will address now is why these components would, could, and can come into an assemblage through the concept of affect. Spinoza's theory that affect is the co-joining of two bodies which can be either 'joy' or 'sadness', may be illuminating to the construction of agency within an assemblage and how it functions. Deleuze defines 'joy' as the coming together of two or more bodies which creates a 'more powerful whole', as opposed to sadness, which 'results in the decomposition of one body' (Woodward and Lea 2010: 161). These are affective relationships and it is affect to which I now turn.

Affect has been conceptualised as what circulates within and between assemblages, both their potential glue and solvent. Yet I worry that there is a problem with either this sort of description of the theory or the theory and/or concept, itself. This is because in and of itself, ‘affect’ is perhaps not really anything, however much of the literature gives a different impression. The sheer volume of its use and the numerous vague descriptions and theorisations hint at affect as something that is either very hard to get at, as it exists as a ‘prepersonal intensity’ (Massumi 2013: xv), or just is not a *thing* to have got. And here lies the rub: it is the talk of it as a *thing* - an object - I find to be misleading. In their verbose style, Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 466) describe affects as weapons on a non-physical level: affect is the ‘active discharge of emotion, the counterattack [...] projectiles like weapons’. This description suggests that affects are flying between and through things, as they ‘transpierce the body’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 415), but are also projected from somewhere, somehow specific – indeed, we might talk of the affect of *someone*. But this focus on an individual does not make sense in a relational ontology and affect can only happen because two (or more) bodies are in relation to one another, even if some bodies are still invested with more affective potentials than others. Seyfert (2012: 28) defines affects as ‘collective or atmospheric forces that operate external to the body’. This makes them seem as if something from an *nth* dimension. Buchanan (1997: 80) offers that ‘[a] body [...] has [...] a multiplicity of affects that are widely dispersed, and in no way controlled by the mind’. Here, again, a singular body is the source. Away from the abstract theorization, towards actual use, Anderson (2014: 5) provides a brief list of sixteen

examples of the spaces 'affect' has been used in, ranging from therapeutic landscapes (Conradson 2005; Lea 2008) to war and violence (Ó Tuathail 2003).

I find this sheer volume of variation problematic. Grossberg (2016: 1004) has criticised many theorisations of affect for 'often seem[ing] to be a race to find the best forebearer'. Unlike debate over Deleuze and Guattari's oeuvre in assemblage, affect theory has a debate over its 'start'. The sheer number of manifestations can make it appear as if 'affect' is essentially anything and nothing: anything the scholar says it is and yet nothing as it is ethereal, indefinable, 'pre-personal' (Colebrook 2002: 38). I find that it has become something of an imprecise tool that can be used to explain that things come together but it does not tell us much of how and why. The result is that, as Grossberg argues (2016: 1004-5) 'people rarely raise, in critical and contested ways, the question of *what they mean* by "affect", leaving one to confront a field without a concept [...] Not only is there no shared definition [...] but this chaotic disagreement is distributed on rather distinct levels of investigation and reality.' As such, I worry that 'affect' does not actually mean anything in the end. Indeed, Anderson (2014: 168) says almost as much: 'If there is no such thing as "affect" itself, then affects are always being contextualised and articulated with [...] more or less anything'. Thus, it 'often appears as something simply to be acknowledged' (Grossberg 2016: 1005). I think affect is in danger of being tautological. To me, this body of work gives the appearance that what scholars are really saying is that while we know that something is still happening between components, no one is quite sure what. As such, 'affect' as a definite 'thing' potentially becomes something of a cover-all, vague meaningless term. What do we gain from its theorisation? Do we gain much, if anything, by describing atmospheres as 'affective': what atmosphere is not?

However, with an emphasis on non-rational relations and emotions, affect is potentially very useful in exploring experience. Rather than providing a definite theory, concept or thing, it provides an orientation towards researching how things and events change one another in unsaid ways and how these construct the results of an assemblage's actions. What I am arguing is that when we say something is 'affective' or 'affected', what we mean is that a relationship between things has changed both, potentially in subtle and unsubtle ways.

This orientation has definite uses. Seeing things as always-already in relation to something else and being attentive to the becoming makes isolating individual actions impossible. For instance, while the act of voting may appear to some as individual as it means entering a booth alone, making a decision for whom to vote and marking the ballot in that way; I argue the when, how, who for, and why of a vote are caught up with a myriad of (affective) relationships.

As such, a relational orientation (in)between the voters and the party challenges the place of rationalism that has tended to colour many conceptions of elections. Those who adhere to party politics as rational, place elections as part of Enlightenment/Lockean rational social contracts of the State (for instance in Edlin et al. 2007; Johnston and Pattie 2013; Weaver 2014; Westinen 2014). By contrast, Westen (2007: xv, his emphasis) asserts that neuroscience research has disproven the ability for absolute rationalism and instead, '*[t]he political brain is an emotional brain*'. All rationalisations are thus, no matter what, emotionally informed. This research is based around MRI scans which record how people, removed from social relations, relate to political material. In contrast, Protevi (2009), following Deleuze and Guattari, places context as intrinsically important and central to how

a person's politics are formed and performed. Ruddick explains that we are not incapable of rationalisation, but:

'[A]ffective politics [...] is deeply implicated within the process of thinking: affective in that it engages the body in a way that [...] is not subordinate to mind but rather an active component in the production of thought [...] The capacity to be affected remains a constant feature of the human condition'. (Ruddick 2010: 27)

We exist because we relate and we relate because we exist. This is not to say some people do not conceive of themselves as rational individuals and perform their interpretation of that, but I posit that my conceptualisation requires that we reconsider what this performance of political choice means and how it is enacted, since we now find it relational and emotional, rather than individualised and rational. Relations are crucial to how an assemblage works, both in itself, and with other assemblages and other bodies.

The campaign of any one party is just one assemblage of many attempting to sway any voter into being territorialised into voting for them. Political psychologists Civettini and Redlawks (2009: 125) have argued that 'politics is about feelings as much as it about thinking' and as such, 'emotions [...] can condition how and when political information is attended to and evaluated, perhaps heightening attention and learning [...] or influencing the updating of evaluations [...] Affect and mood may also have an impact on memory at the stages of encoding, consolidation, and recall'. I am willing to go further and stress that any separation of feeling and thinking is a misnomer. They are co-dependent. Moreover, in a political campaign I argue, we can witness that the importance of the message is not the detail or even meaning, but the feelings it elicits. For instance, Barack Obama's 2008 campaign message of 'hope' and 'change' is important because of how it resonated in the time and space of that election and also became connected with his body; not because 'hope' and 'change' ever had some finite, intrinsic articulation that was relational. Page and

Dittmer (2016: 77) have made the argument that Donald Trump's affect is not necessarily his words, but his 'way-of-being' in the world. Thus, campaigns rely on bodily capacities well beyond reason.

This brings into focus how the abstract machine's intentions are played out. I think the resonance of a campaign (or lack thereof) is constructed through the relations between and through the components, not the intended consequence. For instance, *The Guardian's* political editor Andrew Rawnsley (2001: 5) noted the overwhelmingly negative 1997 New Labour campaign, in contrast to the affective result as reported by comedian Mark Steel:

The thrill of that time was real enough, strangers smiling at each other on trains [...] A video of the election night TV coverage went into the best-selling charts, as did a book called *Were You Up For Portillo?* For a while the election of Tony Blair was presented as one of those events that should unite all humanity in joy. (Steel 2008: 16)

The experience of the New Labour victory was created by not just the whole election and campaign event, but also through the (material and virtual) lived experience and defeat of the Conservatives. This is because any 'resonance machine [is] also a dissonance machine' (Page and Dittmer 2016: 77). The unbridled glee many talk of as a result of that election was not designed by New Labour's campaign: the result is not top-down directed by party or media discourse, it is not due to the abstract machines' plan. Instead, the collective response is produced through a resonating multiplicity of relations. In other words, the *function* does not define the result. An abstract machine may intend to produce agency invested in particular people, things and ideas, at particular points, and sometimes it works as in the 1997 election victory of Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, John Prescott and the rest of the New Labour leadership. At other times, it does not – as with Gordon Brown's 2010 campaign, Labour's first general election loss since 1997. These flows of agency and affect are crucial to understanding the resulting structure of assemblages, as focusing on relations

displacing ideas of inherent hierarchy, scale, and power as the central instigators of what happens. Buchanan insists an assemblage is a hierarchical thing and yet that hierarchy is produced through relations between things. I side with DeLanda's (2013: 51, his emphasis) assertions that 'an approach in terms of interacting parts and emergent wholes leads to a *flat ontology*, one made exclusively of unique singular individuals, differing in spatio-temporal scale but not in ontological status.' This is important because hierarchical and non-hierarchical organisations are equally possible, as well as potentially both in the same body. Both are a form of collaboration: "[i]t is cooperation itself that enables the individual: the social field is the terrain that enables any possible notion of the individual' (Ruddick 2012: 26).

Power is constructed not through being a given, but by *being* given. In this, I follow Deleuze and Guattari's desire to decompose ideas of power as central (Foucault 2013) and Hardt and Negri's theorisation of 'power to'/'power over' (Keucheyan 2014). Agency, generally understood as 'the ability [...] to effect novel and creative changes in the world' (Bonta and Protevi 2004: 5), is distributed amongst the various components of an assemblage (both human and non-) and power is a potential by-product, constituted through those relations.

A relational theorisation of a political party has many implications for how it functions. Since the actions of an assemblage are constructed through continually changing relations, I argue that it is the repetition in particular spaces (such the press, elections, or a prime minister's question times) through which a solid body might appear. In this, I am following Protevi when he explains that:

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the organism as a body politic locked into imposed stereotyped patterns of politically shaped and triggered affective cognition produced by and in term reproducing centralized and hierarchical social systems [...] the

organism in Deleuze and Guattari's sense is [...] a body whose organs are constrained to work for the benefit of the organism as an integrative and emergent whole that functions politically in the proper ways, as determined by its role in a hierarchical social system. (Protevi 2009: xiv-xv)

How events and repeatable actions by those coded as the party, interrupt or intermingle with everyday life and help to maintain the façade of a solid structure, an abstract code called 'Labour.' The campaigning methods are such constraints, repeated to perform Labour, in the same way that Jeffrey (2012: 2) argues that '[s]tates are improvised. Their legitimacy and ability to lay claim to rule rely on a capacity to perform their power.' For my purposes, it is specifically repetition of actions within a party-election context - the repeated relations with the voter to parties and the repeated voter relationship to democracy generally – that is (re)performed by campaigns and elections. Through repetition and reiteration of a campaign through flyers, door-stepping, posters, media (including social media) presence, and so on, the party is made manifest to the voter for that election. The election is a performance of the democratic process of such a State – a demonstration of its actual existence that is not only in the virtual, but physically performed. To add to that, the experience within the party might construct an affinity with those performing the party, thus helping to maintain it.

INTENSIVE TEMPORALITY

Time plays a crucial part of the ontological reorientation that Deleuzo-Guattarian theory presents. It is a key element through which affect is illuminated. Colebrook (2002) asserts that the main impetus of Deleuze's work was to emphasise *difference* (or heterogeneity) and the ultimate marker of difference is time. Rather than simply a flow of unchanging bodies through time, things are always changing. Time *is* difference. Colebrook explains:

Time is the power of life to move and become. Time produces movements, but the error has been to derive time from movements [... But i]nstead of seeing each step of my walk linked as through time, I could see a flowing movement [...] which I then cut up into distinct steps. I would see the walk not as a collection of steps, but as a process of change. (Colebrook 2002: 40)

So, rather than being the same person who started the walk and ended it, we are changing through the walk and when we stop walking, through each motion. Or, as the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus is attributed as saying: 'you could not step twice in the same river' ("Heraclitus" 2015). In understanding what this means for assemblage, I provide a conceptualisation of one concept of Deleuzian time – what has been called duration, or intensive time.

Concepts of time have implications for how an assemblage is understood to have come together, and also performs as it does. Extensive time is the rationalist abstract calculation of time. The measure of a second can be defined as 'the duration of 9,192,631,770 periods of the radiation corresponding to the transition between the two hyperfine levels of the ground state of the caesium 133 atom' ("Unit of time (second)" n.a.). Deleuze argues that this metric notion of time, where every second is the same, has been colonised by a capitalist logic which uses time to measure out how long someone might work a day. This means that 'time [...] is privatized: every hour is the same as every other' (Colebrook 2008: 35). In other words, the hourly wage is a constant, despite the inevitable varying productivity of the worker in question.

By contrast, intensive time is about how that time is experienced by the individual. Here, I am leaning specifically on Colebrook (2008) who has provided some clarity in getting to grips with Bergson's human-centric intensive theory of time. This provides an explanation of how an individual experiences something. Colebrook (2008: 24) explains that '[h]uman

perception and time is structured by action'. Varying productivity and interest in that work can make an hour go by quickly or extremely slowly.

The theory of intensive time posits time experience as affective and relational. What does this mean for politics? I argue that those within a party assemblage experience the election with a different intensity than those outside it. For instance, for the 2015 election, there is the rational concept of the 'long campaign' (roughly started at the 2014 conference) and the 'short campaign' (five weeks before the election). During the run-up to the election these different campaigns affect how those involved, experience the time of that election. Or, in a more straightforward example: a team of volunteers may be sent out for two hours for a morning of door-knocking. How that morning is experienced is dependent on multiple affective factors that may make the time pass in different ways. As such, the experience of the election creates different intensities, which in turn creates differently passing times. These intensities help explain the experience of door-stepping for the volunteers and contribute to the experience of the assemblage, both within and outside it.

EVENTS

Since assemblage theory posits a world that is 'always-becoming', it can become difficult to see the moments at which we can study anything. However, it is necessary to 'cut', as argued by Nietzsche, because otherwise, 'if we do not choose to embrace certain aspects [...] at the expense of others, we would drown in a pure "stream of becoming" and our historical consciousness would lose all shape and coherence' (Spinks 2003: 80). Cutting is one version of what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they talk about 'fragmentary wholes' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013c: 16): as nothing is finished or complete and everything is

always becoming, we have to 'cut' somewhere. Through cutting, we are making the subjects studied into 'vague corporeal essences' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 475) in order to study them. The idea of the 'event' forces our attention to a certain happening, and presents moments at which we might 'cut'.

'Cutting' changes the focus of our understanding of what is happening in movement towards flows of difference. Colebrook explains that for Deleuze,

The body is an effect or outcome of its movement and does not precede the flow of time through which it becomes. Time is always differing from itself. No two 'nows' are the same, and no two points of any movement or action are equivalent [...] In order to perceive time we spatialise it, cut it up into points or the various moments of a movement. But the true time of becoming is "imperceptible [...] each movement transforms the whole of time by producing new becomings". (Colebrook 2002: 43-4)

I argue that being attentive to this cutting allows us to spatialise time by cutting something as it becomes, thus rendering it visible. As such '[c]utting into the flows [...] involves detachment of something from a chain' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 54). Being attentive to *where* we cut will change what we are looking at. This brings us to events.

Much has been written recently about the importance of paying attention to the 'everyday' which might, perchance, reveal how things become structured or how they function. I take issue with this – how are we supposed to notice the truly mundane? Rather, I wish to follow the example of Deleuze and Guattari who looked at the extremes, such as the schizophrenic, to discover what we might learn about what is going on, in the everyday. Thus, another way to illuminate the everyday is around the 'event' – when the everyday mundane is splintered, fractured, and thus revealed. These moments of rupture are 'events'. Beck and Gleyzon (2017: 329) write that 'Deleuzian events are rhizomatic and part of an ever-changing, on-going process [...] they] spur change; they reshape the conceptual and material fabric of connectivity, relationships, pathways and institutions [...], events

begin from the domain of affect and the virtual (temporal) but are only actualised in space.’ These events can be anywhere at any time with any set of components: they are defined by how they intensively change that assemblage. These events, then, create places to ‘cut’ so as to examine what happens, and perhaps remark what are the noticeable moments of, and within, an assemblage. As Spinks (2003: 76) put it, ‘there is no single “purpose” that constitutes a meaning of an event [...] the “meaning” of a thing “is” the history of the “interpretations” that have taken hold of it.’ This serves to remove the hierarchy of planned ‘events’ of an election and places attention on the affective relationships that emerge. I will thus try and place cuts at events. In other words, what marks the experience of both space and the moment.

A CONCERN

There is at least one precaution I need to make before delving into the empirical side of this project. To try to understand the benefits and potential foibles of using assemblage, or any theory, we benefit from looking at its contextual setting, trying to understand what it is rejecting as well as what it is embracing. In this, I am attempting to avoid what Gramsci considered a mistake of his Marxist precursors and contemporaries in their approach to Marx as a timeless science (Merrington 1968). As such, I feel that part of my project should be to examine assemblage theory itself and question the theory and its use. Here I am trying to attend to the affective conditions that swirled around the writing of the original theory. Central to this is my concern over the utility of my research; I feel a need to address what I interpret as non-representational that could otherwise be described as an ultra-relativistic stance, an issue I suspect of much post-’68 theory.

Contextually, Deleuze (and Guattari's) work can be seen as building on the broad project spurred on by the student Paris uprising of 1968 (Buchanan and Thoburn 2008; Patton 2000; Keucheyan 2014). In part, the post-'68, or 'post-structuralist' theorists rejected the one-size-fits-all universalisations that seemed to mark most Marxist strands of thought, as well as other structural theories. In their critique of power, State and capitalism, the post-1968 project seems to me to be broadly based around dissolving the images of solid, timeless structures and any inherent power of State. Keucheyan (2014) argues that this group was also one of the first groups of critical theorists to be divorced from being actively involved in revolutionary movements, arguing that the goal of the studies of critical theorists prior to 1929 was taking over the State; but since the influence of Gramsci's notebooks, it has been towards a (to use the Gramscian term) 'war of position'.

I think we can also understand part of this philosophical change as a move from a Universalist one-size-fits all towards a Western individualism. An obsession with an isolated individual, I find to be in line with some neoliberal tendencies, or as Negri would have it, people have become 'decreasingly massified and increasingly "singularities"' (Keucheyan 2014: 85). The Deleuze and Guattari concept of 'open wholes' (how things function through their relations, not because they are complete and perfect) seems to be an acknowledgement of that and an attempt to provide a solution to both the problem of the necessity of some totalising theories, and also to that of incessant individuality. In other words, there is no such thing as the isolated individual. Another important factor is that assemblage theory is another challenge to the Cartesian eye as it places relationships at the centre. For instance; I, as the researcher, cannot somehow step outside my assemblage to have a bird's-eye view as I am continuously entangled in multiple assemblages and perspectives. This is furthered by an individuals' non-representational stance, meaning that

the experience of one cannot be broadened to represent a group. Each experience is unique to its own and never totally understood by someone outside it.

The many uses of such an 'ontological-turn' might suggest an ultra-relativistic ontology. By this, I mean it appears that each individual and event is a singularity, absolutely unique to its time and space (DeLanda 2013). This perspective potentially limits anything we might learn outside that experience's own uniqueness. The use of the theory potentially becomes but a description of a view point of something that happened that can never happen again. This leads to a difficult question – what, then, is the point of studying this singular event? Graeber (2015) worries that the ontological approach taken by anthropologists influenced by Deleuze and Guattari restricts potentials for conversations too much, that it becomes impossible to have a 'conversation'. He argues that

If the great strength of [the Ontological Turn] is its willingness to embrace the limits of human knowledge [...] its greatest flaw that is that it doesn't take this principle far enough [...] There is never any sense that people existing inside other Ontologies have any trouble understanding each other, let alone the world around them; rather, out of respect for their otherness, we are obliged to act as if their command of their environment were so absolute that there were no differences whatever between their ideas about, say, trees, and trees themselves. (Graeber 2015: 22)

He finds it 'makes it effectively impossible for us to recognise one of the most important things all humans really do have in common: the fact that we all have to come to grips, to one degree or another, with what we cannot know' (Graeber 2015: 22). The underlying criticism seems to be that the ontological turn might err towards a description of something – something that Buchanan (2015) worries about in Delanda's interpretation of assemblage.

By contrast, Graeber's stance is that we might, instead, acknowledge and privilege a lack of absolute knowledge. Crucially, while 'nobody ever will be able to understand the world completely [...] this gives us something to talk about. It also gives us the opportunity to unsettle one another's ideas in a way that might prove genuinely dialogic' (2015: 28). In

light of this, I think that without criticism of the subjects, without trying to learn through rather than just about, that 'event', we are missing too much of what is going on and how everything is interconnected. So, following Graeber, I wish to reject what I see as the potential for ultra-relativism in post-structuralism and still think we might find and learn things from human experience, and in conversations with equals, that we can apply. Thus, although I have criticised electoral geography, rather than denying the validity of previous electoral geographies, I wish to contribute to their world. This is, after all, an election that happened in space and time.

CONCLUSION

The ambition of this chapter has been to state a case for the use of assemblage and affect in the study of political parties, elections and campaigns. I have thus sought to present a platform from which to investigate political parties *as* social assemblages that are becoming, in relation to the election event. It is my desire to try and provide new insights into what elections might mean and do, thus contributing to the growing body of research that utilises the concepts of assemblage and affects while also giving some novel insights into electoral and political geography. I propose to do this by moving away from ideas of rational voters and discourse studies. Instead, I take up concepts of the emotive, affective, bodied, and material. I seek to revitalise political and electoral geography's understanding of the political party and reinsert it back into our unfolding fields of study.

I have demonstrated that the role of political parties in the social sciences has not been studied in such a way since both the cultural-turn in human geography, as well as the rise of neoliberalism. Despite some efforts, the practitioners of electoral geography have

continued to be dominated by an overall focus on its overcoding numerical results. This tends to render not only the election result somewhat lifeless but also political parties as placeless and bodiless. Importantly, they maintain an idea of political parties as separate from society and thus never part of the multiplicitous relations found within a heterogeneous society. In political geography, more widely, the study of the political party has been usurped as other interests and concerns have come to the fore. In some ways, this echoes the rise of interest in 'secondary fronts', while concerns over the performance and maintenance of State through elections and political parties have gone unstudied.

I argue that these criticisms have validity not just in geography but – wider still – across the social sciences. Although sociologists Mudge and Chen, and De Leon (et al's) criticism of the field may be poignant, I find their ways forward lacking in novel insights. And while the utilisation of Gramscian theory of hegemony has continued to prove fruitful in some hands, it leads to cleavages. I am interested in what a more fluid concept may offer. Similarly, as Foucault's theories continue to provide new insight into political subjectivities, I think that to retrace the political party and election fields with the same theories is to continue to ignore how other fields have progressed and shed new light. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari were building on much of Foucault's work while differing from it. Thus, I think there is room for new insights into elections and political parties and I hope that through assemblage, we might find some new ground of critique, some novel understanding of how things and people are enmeshed, and what it means to be in a political party.

Under the framework of assemblage, political parties lose their image of solidity. They are created through the affective relations of people, materials and virtuals that are always becoming. I am aiming to focus on the relations between components of the party assemblage at the heart of my analysis. I hope to find that political parties are embodied in

different situations and different times, subject to a multiplicity of relations and intensities. Furthermore, I am hoping to throw some light onto the performance of the society/political party divide by exploring how people move in and out of the assemblage, affecting and changing how the political party is, itself, becoming.

Important to this is the abstract machine. While I do not think it totally necessary for all assemblage theories, I do think there is a case to be made for being aware of it when one is locatable. But, as I have argued, there are many different interpretations of what an 'abstract machine' is. Wanting to be attentive to the potentials of these ideas, I spend some of this thesis *testing* an understanding of an abstract machine as the 'deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan' (Buchanan 2015: 385), Patton's (2000: 44) 'software program'). I am not trying to assert a strict understanding of the abstract machine, but rather explore the potentials of this understanding in the context of this thesis. I shall return to this concept in the final conclusion.

I am focusing in on particular relations within the assemblage. I do this because framing the election as an 'event' gives me a place in which to cut the always becoming (the election), and to focus my study on changes. This does not mean that different Labour assemblages are not becoming at the same time as the one focused on the election. After all, parliament was only dissolved to make way for campaigning on the 30 March 2015, five weeks before the election. By that time, I had been studying the campaign since the September 2014 Manchester Conference. But, my concern is the election and the assemblages related to that, so that it where my study lay.

In the empirical chapters I delve into more assemblage theory as well as some other bodies of knowledge, but the above is my groundwork in the use of the concept. It is the relations I witnessed that constructed Labour which are my focus in this thesis. In doing so, I

am placing an emphasis on the people that frequently go unheard in most coverages of elections, be they journalistic or academic. Political parties, I argue, are part of a performance and they continue to play an important part in the becoming of the State as well as in how different societies become. They are not post-political ghostly figures with no effect in the face of neoliberalism.

As we shall see in the next chapter (on the method of research), assemblage and affect present some novel challenges to fieldwork due to their theoretical framework and their emphasis on flows, relations and becoming. It is perhaps necessary that I took an open and experimental approach to the fieldwork and tried to embrace the becoming of the project and the non-representational elements of the theory at hand.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

As my previous chapter suggests, assemblage has been much theorised. However, with some acceptations (Acuto 2014; Dittmer 2013, 2014a, 2017), it has seldom been used in empirical investigations. Specifically, it has not been used to investigate political parties during an election period; and neither has an ethnographic approach. It seems to me that, through an emphasis on becoming, (de)territorialising and (de)coding, the ontology of assemblage and affect suggests a methodology based on capturing interconnection: tracing and witnessing things as they become. To try and understand an assemblage in its becoming – how its components may come from diverse spaces and times to combine for an event to ‘do something’ – it made sense to explore (cut) a specific organisation during a specific event (in this case, Labour during the 2015 General Election). In this way, the ethnographic methods I used in the following empirical chapters arose out of my reading of assemblage. This is not to deny that a more genealogical or historical approach has merits and would not be interesting, but instead, my approach leads me to focus on lived-experience around the flux of people, materials, and virtuals that flow through the assemblage. For a DeLanda approach to assemblage, a history of door-stepping in Labour to inform a focus on their methodology for the 2015 election, for instance, would meet the criteria of a ‘redundant causation’, because ‘genesis is superfluous, and is relevant only insofar that it leaves lasting fingerprints on each individual. Yet such fingerprints can still have numerous possible causes, their exact contingent details often irrelevant to the new situation [...] entities are partially cut off from their past’ (Harman 2008: 374). In other words, the Labour assemblage present in this thesis is only partly a result of Labour’s history, and a focus on that history

would leave silent the multiplicities of becomings at the moments of cutting. Moreover, other methods, archival or oral, would also produce a different body of empirics in the first place to analyse. Many of the people here are not officially or socially part of Labour, but rather are on the peripheries of the recorded experience of the party, part of the everyday of a campaign but not of a party. They are not those leaders who take up the core of political historical approaches (for instance, Pelling and Reid 1996; Pearmain 2011; Coates 2013) and even those more membership-focused histories (for instance, Robinson 2012; Seyd and Whiteley 2002). This is also partly about exploring how the big P- and everyday p-politics are intermeshed, as people's daily lives become entwined with the campaign. A history of door-stepping within the party would, for instance, be fascinating: but it is not this project. This project was about capturing a party assemblage becoming during an election.

To continue on this theme, another conceptual approach (for example based around Foucauldian Governmentality, or Gramscian Hegemony) would have produced a different methodology, and thus gathered different data. I reiterate, however, that part of the purpose of this project was to investigate the use of assemblage in relation to the fieldwork. Assemblage was always part of this project, and as I have said in the Introduction, this project became about testing it in certain spaces. I question DeLanda's interpretation of assemblage as 'providing the building blocks for an entire ontology or metaphysical system' (Acuto and Curtis 2012: 6), as well as Buchanan's interpretation of assemblage as 'purposeful' (2015: 385). Rather, if assemblage is – as Deleuze and Guattari wished – a tool (Grossberg 2014), what can it be used to do? This is a valid question not just from an analysis perspective, but from a research-design one, too.

Thus, this project began with a wish to explore elections and political parties through assemblage and affect and with a desire to understand how the State might reproduce

itself, starting from a position that questioned the State and political parties. These methods were conceived to work together to focus on the assemblage that is the subject of this thesis, but this is not to say that other methods and other approaches could not be used, (nor were any other considered – I limited myself to these few). Thus, this thesis can be interpreted as testing some of the potentials of what Fox and Alldred (2015: 403) call a ‘research-assemblage [... which] recognise[s] research as a territorialisation that shapes the knowledge it produces to the particular flows of affect produced by its methodology and methods.’

As such, my fieldwork encompassed a year experiencing and participating in the Labour Party. It was focused around an ethnography of the campaign for the 7 May 2015 general election, as well as the 2014 and 2015 Conferences. During this, I witnessed Ed Miliband’s last conference as leader, the subsequent leadership election and Jeremy Corbyn’s first conference as leader. My methodology was designed to pay attention to the complex interrelated affective ‘everyday’ world in which the campaign is situated, as well as the multiple forms Labour can take. I understand my methods and role as part of what Dewsbury (2010: 321) describes as a ‘performative, non-representational and affect-based research’ experiment. The underlying idea was to examine how the local party manifests itself, as well as the relations with the leadership, the wider population, other parties, and the technologies that mediate.

The research was set in three spaces: at the conferences, the campaign trail in Brighton and Hove on the south coast of the United Kingdom, and on digital social media. I chose four different methods: participant observation, interviews, autoethnography and discourse analysis. These spaces and methods were chosen in an attempt to gain insight into the different expressions of Labour in the local, digital and discursive world of the

campaign. Assemblages and affect lead to an idea of a campaign where the detail of how the various assemblages and components relate to one another and the affective result of the election is as important as the numerical outcome.

These different methods came together under the label 'ethnography.' Lacking any one specific technique, ethnographies are more a collection of various qualitative methods used to research a subject in place and time, including the placing of the researcher amongst the subjects. Although the style originated and continues in anthropology, it found favour in human geography with Cook and Crang (1995) and has helped direct attention to many subjects of concern in the field. Hammersley and Atkinson put forward that the idea of ethnography:

Usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry. (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3)

While trying to be attentive to the researcher's place in the field, an ethnography tries to examine the lived-experience. In terms of political geography and the use of assemblage within it, I aim to follow Megoran (2006) in trying to move away from the abstraction of State-discourse, towards a peopling of the parties. An ethnography is a suitable way to study assemblage and affect because the use of a multiplicity of methods can be designed to pay attention to some of the multiple factors occurring in an assemblage. In doing this, I am trying to follow, as Grossberg (2014: 2-3) writes, 'Deleuze and Guattari [... who] take up Spinoza (and Nietzsche, among others) as a statement of a non- and even anti-Kantian modernity, built upon an ontology of multiplicity and immanence.' In many ways, an

ethnography can be understood to draw material together so as to produce an assemblage of a thesis.

The information each approach gathered is necessarily understood in relation to one another and any one technique should not be conceived as trying to get to grips with any distinct, singular research question (although some methods lent themselves to some questions more than others). In the final analysis, all the methods informed one another as attention was paid to the complex, messy world studied, trying to be mindful of Connolly's (2008: 39-40) observation that '[c]ausation of a resonance between elements [... is] fused to a considerable degree [... as] causality, as relations of dependence between separate factors, morphs into energised complexities of mutual imbrication and interinvolvement'. My approach was to gather as much information as possible, however I had to restrict myself to something I could physically undertake as a lone researcher, and thus limited myself to four methods: two that I would do in interaction with other people (participant observation and interviews) and two that I could do through digitally data-basing materials (digital ethnography and discourse analysis). The first technique was participant observation of the 2014 and 2015 Conferences, and the campaign by the Hove Labour Party during the run up to the election; the second was semi-structured interviews with volunteers and campaign staff in Brighton and Hove; the third was an autoethnography of my pre-established social media world; and lastly, a media-based discourse analysis. Also, included in this chapter is a consideration of ethics, risk, and my relationship with the Labour Party and the leadership's perspective in 2015.

I chose to situate my participant observation and interviews of the campaign in Brighton and Hove, the host city of Labour's 2015 conference. Brighton and Hove is a small city on the south coast of the UK, with an estimated population of 289,900 in 2014 (Brighton & Hove City Council Communications Team 2014). It has two universities and is a commuter hub for London. It has three Members of Parliament (MPs) (Hove and Portslade, Brighton Pavilion, and Kemptown and Peacehaven) and 54 city councillors. None of the MP seats were considered 'safe': in the 2010 general election, Hove (36.7% of a 69.5% turnout) and Kemptown (38% of 67%) went to the Conservatives, and Brighton Pavilion (31.3% of 70%) awarded the Green Party their first MP in Caroline Lucas. During the New Labour years (1997-2010) all three MPs were Labour, having been Conservative before that. All three MP seats were on Labour's 2015 list of 106 battleground seats⁶: Brighton Pavilion was number 19 (1.2% swing for a Labour win), Kemptown 25 (1.6%), and Hove 28 (1.9%). All were targets that the Labour leadership felt were winnable.

The political complexity of the city is revealed partly by the councillors' seat distribution. While Labour won a majority in 1997, since 2003 the council has not been controlled by any one party. In early 2015, it had a small Green plurality (Greens 21 seats, Conservative 18, Labour 14, and one Independent), having previously had a Conservative one. The official Labour strategy targeted many of the councillor seats and put up 'paper candidates' in those seats they did not expect to have a chance of winning.

⁶ A ranking 'was developed using national swing + demographic and regional vote share models + local [government] election results' (*LabourList* 2013)

The powerful position of the Green Party made the politics of campaigning unique in England. It meant that not only was Labour battling the Conservatives, but also one of the few further 'left' seats in the UK. The Greens' position on the council seemed to imbue a sense of confidence in the Green candidates (however unpopular the Green-controlled council was). The Hove incumbent (Mike Weatherly) was stepping down, with former policeman and councillor Graham Cox selected as the Conservative candidate. Simon Kirby (Conservative) had won Kemptown in 2010 by 3.1%. As such, Labour put forward Purna Sen in Brighton Pavilion, Peter Kyle in Hove, and Nancy Platts in Kemptown (who had previously run against Caroline Lucas in 2010 in Pavilion).

The local results of the 2015 election was that Labour's Peter Kyle won Hove (42.3 % of a 71% turnout), Caroline Lucas retained Pavilion (41.8% of a 71.4% turnout, to Labour's 27.3%), and Simon Kerby (Conservatives) held Kemptown (40.7% of a 66.8% turnout, to Labour's 39.2%). On the council, Labour gained a small plurality of 23 seats to the Conservatives' 20 and the Greens' 11. Brighton and Hove was now a city made up of one Labour, one Green and one Conservative seat. Through these election results, Brighton and Hove retained a unique political dynamic, as well as having the only Labour seat on the south coast during this parliament. Moreover, despite the animosity during the campaign, Kyle and Lucas vowed to work together afterwards.

1. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation was the first method I considered in conceiving an ethnography conceived through assemblage and affect. Since the Cartesian perspective cannot even be considered in this theory, embedding oneself amongst the subjects of study makes sense. It

also seemed to place me within a space where I could observe the relations between the various leaderships, technologies and people involved in the campaign, in reference to all the research questions. This method also makes sense in relation to the use of affect as being aware of the researchers and the subjects' bodily reactions in the field.

Participant observation is a method that means becoming embedded within the group one wishes to study (Watson and Till 2010). Megoran (2006: 623) is insistent that 'ethnographic participant observation is a research method neglected by political geographers, yet one that could enrich and vivify the growing, and somewhat repetitious body of scholarship on both critical geopolitics.' It proved a crucial part of my investigation into the manifestation of the party in difference places, as it provided a first-hand experience of the Labour conferences, campaign and leadership contest, and those involved in creating them.

Labour is peopled by those involved in the parliamentary party, the constituency parties, and the trade union associates. But perhaps the most neglected group in studies are those who hold membership cards (approximately 190,000 members as of September 2014 [Nardelli 2014] growing to 325,000 in September 2015 [LabourList 2015c]), or volunteer for it. At the time of designing the methodology it seemed as if this membership base provided the party's main method for re-election. Although this will be more closely examined in Chapters 5 and 6, the leadership focused their campaign around using party volunteers (not necessarily members) to garner voter information through door-stepping (knocking on doors and asking questions), leafleting and phone-banking to figure out if individuals were sympathetic to Labour. The party would supposedly then use this information to target those potential voters with the appropriate variation of (yet more) leaflets, door stepping, emails and events, all of which attempted to cater to various sensibilities (one was

supposed to receive different information depending on previous votes as a Green, Liberal Democrat, etc.). Through these actions, the volunteers, the Labour Parliamentary Candidates, councillors, potential Labour voters, and others might embody the local party on the doorstep. I was interested in how encounters with 'society' on the doorstep are shaped by how volunteers embodied the Brighton and Hove District Labour Party, as well as the ideas of the central Labour Party office (the leadership) and the material of the campaign (both physical and digital, local and national). Through this focus on people, materials, and virtuals, I wanted to trace the role of affects of the party and the campaign, both within the party and outside it.

Beginning in January 2015, I volunteered for the Hove Labour Party (80,799 electorate⁷). This was the 'proper' start of the long-campaign (a campaign that arguably begun in early 2011 when five-year parliaments were introduced, or in Hove in 2013 when Peter Kyle was selected as the candidate [le Duc 2013]). In the run up to the election, I became entrenched in Hove itself, permanently spending a period known as the 'short' campaign there (the traditional five-week election campaign in the UK). I felt focusing on this singular seat would allow me a deeper and more personal relationship with those involved in it. I also thought focusing on one seat would help me understand the areas that they go to and how they work within those areas, and to get to grips in better detail with the manifestations of Hove Labour and their relations with other Labours, and other political parties.

⁷ 'Constituency: Hove' on *PostcodeArea: Britain's postcodes, mapped*.
<http://www.postcodearea.co.uk/postaltowns/brighton/bn3/constituency/>. Last accessed 13/10/2016

As such, at 10am on 9 January 2015, I turned up at the campaign office Kyle and his team had set up on Church Road in Hove, near Hove Town Hall. Until 7 May, I reported with increasing frequency to that office. Although they tried some different tactics of organising people through the period, this office was by-and-large the space we met in every time. It was split over two floors: the bottom floor was an open space filled with material to be sent out. It is where we gathered, where people stuffed envelopes and where we were sent out from. The top floor was more of an office, it held computers and tea-and-coffee making facilities.

My activities were predominantly composed of door-knocking. I would either be knocking on a door, or eventually 'running the board' for a team (directing which doors to go to, and subsequently recording the answers). This entailed going out to a selection of streets as directed by the organisers of the campaign with a small team (4 or 5 people generally), a 'board' of names, address and spaces for coded answers to questions, and a map with the streets to be covered.

My ethnography of the conference was different. The 2014 Conference consisted of travelling to Manchester and staying in a room in an AirBnB flat that was occupied by other conference goers and others, and going to different meetings and speeches at the conference and its fringe. My focus at the 2014 conference was on how Labour was assembling the election campaign, both through the discourse put forward during the campaign, and the training they provided during the conference. I did much the same at the 2015 Conference, but attempted to focus on how those attending understood the 2015 campaign and election result, as well as the results of the leadership campaign. Apart from the speeches by members of the 'leadership' (such as Ed Miliband, Ed Balls, Yvette Cooper,

and so on), the meetings I went to were tailored around approaches to campaigning and elections.

Besides witnessing and participating in the interactions that performed Labour, participant observation was useful in targeting issues around the role and use of technology internally, how the campaign tried to construct a 'human touch', and the role social media plays internally. I took notes on my smartphone which I would later elaborate into a research diary on my laptop. This was compiled at the end of every day of encounter, both at conference and during the campaign. I reflected upon this information continuously as I processed the information over the following days. I also kept a research diary during the 'event' of the leadership campaign. As I have stated, what I hoped to acquire through this technique was an understanding of how the campaign on the ground comes together through the multifarious relations between people, materials and virtuals.

I also asked those within my social network in Brighton and Hove to save any Labour campaign content they received and to describe their experience of being door-stepped. This material also helped me reflect on the technologies Labour utilised to spread their campaign, and Labour's presence within certain spaces. This information was received through a variety of conversations in person, in text as well as on technology such as Facebook messenger. It was documented through my research diary on note-taking technology Evernote, note-keeping on my phone, and audio-recordings on my smart phone.

DIGITAL PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Digital social media are becoming more and more utilised in political campaigns, although Obama's 2008 campaign is seen by some as the first (and perhaps one of the few) to have been successful because of it (Carr 2008). Indeed, Jensen and Anstead (2014: 58) argue that

‘Twitter and Facebook have become standard communication tools’ within the field of politics. But the affective consequences are still under-explored. I was interested in people’s relationships with social media and party politics, as well as the various means those within Labour used these modern tools for communication and organisation. There was a question around the role of digital social media in the assemblage’s performance of the campaign, and how it relates to the other components of a campaign. This method was also designed to address my research questions around concerns about the use of digital media. Moreover, it was practical, as I have suggested above – an approach I could handle myself in the space and time whilst being aware of the difficulties current social media platforms provide in qualitative research.

Studying it is not straightforward. Pinkerton and Benwell (2014: 13) have criticised the study of media in geopolitics arguing ‘the “popular” in popular geopolitics has [...] often been used by virtue of its mass consumption rather than by virtue of whom it has been conceived, produced or circulated’. The relationship with an audience is difficult to come to grips with and it is not enough to ask, as Burgess (2006: 203) did, ‘who is heard, and to what end?’: we must ask ‘who is heard *by whom*, and to what end?’ To attempt to address this, I experimented by conducting a digital participant observation of my experience of my readily-available online social network to understand how those within it (again, including myself) related to party politics at different moments during the campaign, vote and (affective) result.

The problem with studying social media starts with the realisation that many uses are not situated only in a physical-social context but also in a digital-social context (i.e. a continuous communication that flows from face-to-face interaction through to interactions on texts, calls, emails as well as on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and so

on, through smart phones, tablets and computers). There have been several different approaches to digital ethnographies by those within social sciences and humanities, and even in geography, Ash et al. (2016: 1) argue that we are in the middle of a 'digital turn' in geography. However, Duggan (2017: n.a.) finds that 'geographers have so far broadly neglected ethnographic approaches to studying the "digital."' By looking at a type of social media based participant observation, I am trying to address this neglect in small ways, hoping to find an approach that illuminates some of the ways in which these digital platforms mediate everyday P-/p- political experiences.

The use of the Internet and social media is related to how we as social beings use it within our social groups. Different individuals use different social media differently, and one can be part of a plethora of such groups. Or put another way, there may be mainstream homogenised platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and so on), but assemblage and affect focus us on the qualitative heterogeneous, not the quantitative, and homogenised and social media is used and experienced in heterogeneous ways.

The material people interact with online comes through the various algorithms, social networks and media networks, and is related in complex ways. Anthropologist Danny Miller (2012: 148) argues that 'Social Networking Sites' are unlike most spaces Internet studies have focused on (mainly individual websites for a phenomenon, such as www.labour.co.uk), and provide different relationships: '[o]n Facebook, peer-to-peer friendships were joined by family and kin-based networks, and in some cases, also saw the dissolution of the distinction between home and work'. (I would add to this group that there are acquaintances who have become Facebook friends for various reasons.) It is exactly this group which I thought would be most interesting to study, and so I argue that the use of one's already-available social network offers some potential for at least understanding how

some of the researchers' social media network relates to political campaigns and events. To attempt to try and find, distinguish, or create a new social media network would have been absurd – unlike forums, social media networks are semi-contained groups ('bubbles' is the most frequently used metaphor) of people, sets of networked individuals who adhere to temporal and (some) pre-established relational affects. In particular, it was Facebook that was important as it has become a prominent place in online communication and the sharing of information within a group, as Miller describes above. One study finds that '[h]alf of all adult Facebook users have more than 200 friends in their network' (Smith 2014), and people coalesce around different reasons to interact (music, politics, religion, and so on). Despite the sprawling potential of the Internet, it is nonetheless arguable that everybody is subject to an Internet bubble.

I used my social network to try to see what political material is interacted with because I wanted to glimpse at what those outside the Labour assemblage felt in relation to the campaign materials. In other words, I was trying to understand people's (my bubble's) relationships with the campaign(s), particularly paying attention to the 'viral' aspect of it – what they (re)post, from where, and how they talk about it. This method proved particularly useful during the leadership campaign, as it became increasingly evident that Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign was resonating with a young, left-leaning audience. It was the sheer volume of material shared, and who was sharing, that convinced me this was a result of the general election I should not neglect.

These interactions were recorded through screenshots on both my computer and mobile phone (both operating systems contain automatic date and time labelling). I feel this source went some way in helping to illuminate how the two P/p- politics are caught up with one another.

In this approach, I wanted to utilise an ‘epistemological orientation’ (Butz 2010: 139) in order to reflect on my place within the research results. This is in attention to the utilisation of networks of people that are not based around organisations but are always becoming, and coming together openly around the social. In this, I am adopting Pinkerton and Benwell’s (2015: 14) approach that ‘everyday life is profoundly imbued with both the construction and deconstruction of geopolitical discourses’ in the study of political campaigns and elections. I feel this fits well not only with non-representational ideas, but also with the project to embody the relationship between populations and political parties.

2. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

I chose semi-structured face-to-face and phone interviews as another method, as I understand them to be potentially the most useful way to gain qualitative insight as they have the greatest potential to follow the data that the other research methods provide. In relation to affect, semi-structured interviews are a process that can bring two people (interviewer and interviewee) into an affective relationship with one another. They have the potential to highlight affective issues the interviewees have focused on and felt. For instance, in the case of this thesis the focus on Jeremy Corbyn would perhaps, not have come into fruition without interviews. Thus, this method became crucial. It also allows the researcher to situate themselves as not at the centre of the assemblage, but as a component. Dunn (2010: 102) describes the benefits of doing interviews as: ‘an excellent method of gaining access to information about events, opinions, and experiences’ that potentially ‘allow [... one] to understand how meanings differ among people.’ Interviews were used to discuss singular experiences of the campaign, and how people understand

them, their place in them, and their place within society, but also to illuminate my own experience of the campaign and leadership contest. My Labour membership, experiences of campaigning and on-going discourse analysis (see below) informed the questions, and general conversation.

The interviews took place after the election and I framed them as social encounters, hoping that by so doing, the interviewee would be as relaxed and comfortable as possible. I suggested or asked for a venue, normally resulting in a café in Brighton and Hove and sometimes in a public house, hoping these social spaces allowed, again, relaxation. In a few cases, telephone interviews were their preferred method. The post-election timing meant that the pressure and tension of the election was off the volunteer and the party workers, and hopefully allowed for some reflection (although, I did capture some feelings about the leadership election as it happened). McDowell describes each interview as ‘a complex and contested social encounter riven with power relations [...] the social researcher is a supplicant, dependent upon the cooperation of interviewees, who must both agree to participate and feel willing and able to share with the interviewer the sorts of information on which the success of work will depend’ (McDowell 2010: 161). While I do (as stated above) resist the totalisation of all social interactions as power, I do acknowledge it is certainly there in interviews. As for the results of interviews, I follow the oral historian Portelli’s (1998) argument that interviews might reveal what is truly important of an event and not a reflection of the ‘facts’:

‘The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no ‘false’ oral sources [...] the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that ‘wrong’ statements are still psychologically ‘true’ and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts’ (Portelli 1998: 68).

This helped to inform where to 'cut', and how to do so. I interviewed eleven people who were involved for different periods and in different roles during the campaigns, as well as the local-party employees in the two other seats in Brighton and Hove. None were involved in the Hove campaign as I felt that I had gained enough insight about that and I wanted to know how the different campaigns performed and related to that campaign. It was their performance as Labour volunteers and their conceptions of Labour that I thought crucial to understanding how the local parties are manifested. I first tried to source interviewees primarily through approaching them on social media (Twitter and Facebook) where they had been active and vocal members, and also from a 'gatekeeper' within the local party. Through the first method, I was hoping to avoid the personal bias of the gatekeepers approved list, yet I fell back to it when respondents fell quiet. The discussions resulted in 1028 minutes of conversation: the shortest interview was 45 minutes, while the longest was two and a half hours. Although Cook and Crang (1995) advise not to allow interviews to go over an hour, I argue that allowing the conversation as much time as the participant warranted can be a technique that draws out extensive information. The interviews informed me of a myriad of experiences. I was interested in how the various interviewees responded to the emphasis on them as volunteers/activists, with Ed Miliband pledging that Labour will have 'four million door-step conversations' between January and May 2015 (Hope 2015). During these interviews, the 2015 Labour leadership contest was ongoing and it inevitably became a focus of many of the discussions – after all, these were people who were actively involved in the Labour assemblage. These interviews helped illuminate the relationships within the party, as well as the role of some technologies, intensities, and codings.

The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone application on my smartphone. I was hopeful that the appearance of a phone on the table – so ubiquitous these days – would be a relatively unobtrusive object compared to an alien piece of technology such as a dedicated dictaphone as pointed out by Dunn (2010: 119). I prepared a series of questions to inspire conversation, but also kept open that ability for movement, in contrast to a more structured interview approach. To attend to matters beyond sound waves recorded, I recorded information on a notepad. I subsequently transcribed these interviews verbatim onto Evernote, adding the notes from the notepad, and other data that occurred to me as I went along. I then transferred these to NVivo, where I coded them.

3. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Assemblage requires something of an experimental attitude in order to get to grips with the topic at hand. Understanding how the campaign is related to the wider world is very important. As such, I also developed my ethnography to include myself as well as pre-established social networks that were not around the Labour Party. As Vannini (2015) has written:

to say that non-representational ethnography focuses on affect as a subject of research is not the same as to suggest that affect is a medium through which ethnographic research unfolds. Put in other words, it is not enough for non-representational ethnography to be about affect; it must also be affective. (Vannini 2015: 312)

The placing of myself was designed to try and understand the affect of the campaign and the general election outside the party's immediate intentions, and also how I myself was affected by, and affecting, the process of partaking in the campaign.

I understand this as part of an 'autoethnography' that uses myself and my immediate social and cultural links to understand the context of my research in the wider world. As Butz (2010: 139) says, 'autoethnography is not a methodology, nor even a set of methods [...] Rather, it is an epistemological orientation to the relationship among experience, knowledge, and representation that has a variety of methodological implications'. Since performing an autoethnography includes "'insider" and "complete-member" academic researchers who study a group or social circumstance of which they are party' (Butz 2010: 139), it is a necessary movement towards self-reflexivity, to acknowledge myself as part of the affective atmosphere of which I study. Rather than simply pretending I was uninvolved with those I participated with, the autoethnographic element helped to illuminate how some in Brighton and Hove relate with the party and the campaign, making explicit the link between big P- and little p- politics.

It also helped me to locate the role of the election amongst this amorphous group of people. This was informative as while the election was important, it is not the only thing happening in people's lives. Brighton is a place that lends itself to an autoethnography for me, as I lived in both Hove and Kemptown from 2000 to 2008, have family there, and many friends and acquaintances. My experience of the city (like anybody's) is a bubble: the bulk of my network fit into the code of well-educated 'liberal-left' (riding the spectrum from social liberal to anarchist), white, between their mid/late-20s and early-50s. Living throughout the city, they maintain a variety of jobs from skilled manual labourers, local civil servants, care workers, publicans, artists/musicians, academics, students and a variety of other professions. A majority who felt 'enabled' to do so (those living in Brighton Pavilion) voted Green in 2010, having previously been Labour and Liberal Democrat voters. Although not directly, my interaction with them meant I also experienced the Labour party campaign

outside of the immediate campaign. I hoped to obtain information on the affect of the campaign and the relations to the various codings and territorialisations. This helped to address issues around the role of technologies in communication, discourse and the affect of the virtual in the campaign.

4. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Although it takes much more of a 'background' role given the focus of this thesis, an understanding of the discourses swirling around the campaigns is necessary. The national campaign, local and national press and different social media campaigns provide important contexts within which the local campaign takes place. A variation on a traditional discourse analysis of the national and local media helped to establish such a context and discourse, and thus revealed some of the most repeated and local discourses at play. This helped to establish the complex relationships between the spheres of media, central campaign and the local. It was necessary to understand phrases that were repeated (such as 'Ed Miliband is weird', 'anybody but the Greens', or 'I don't trust any of them') both by those within Labour, and those answering the doors. This discourse analysis thus helps to provide context.

According to assemblage theory, the party is becoming in multifarious spaces simultaneously and I argue that a still important (if slightly waning) influence of the campaign is the traditional media spaces of television and print. Both local and national media help shape the literature and material of a campaign and how it is understood. Indeed, part of the purpose of the repetitive discourse from a campaign is that it is repeated in the media. While the UK vote format is about voting for a local MP, that vote is also for a

party and hence a leader. Since at least the first Tony Blair campaign (which was noted for its presidential style) there has been as much weight and focus given to the leader of the party as to the campaign (Thorpe 2001, Pearmain 2011). This focus is perhaps warranted considering that the professionalization of the political parties and the campaigns have become more controlled and shaped by the headquarters (Mudge and Chen 2011). However, I did not wish to repeat previous issues in ascribing the media overwhelming power over the unfolding of the public understanding of news, in other words what Dittmer and Gray (2010: 1664) call 'an agency-centered notion of discourse [...] in which powerful actors shape discourses which then descend upon the masses to ensnare them'. I am cautious of the 'political bubble' of studying media discourse and wanted to find a way around it. Moreover, Thomas (2005) points out that much of the popular press (and TV) is not concerned with politics, even during a campaign. To read every political article in *The Sun*, watch every *Channel4 News* interview, critique every BBC Radio4 *Today* interview would have been impossible, as well as essentially driving into those old potholes.

So rather than simply asserting that the discourse running through 'mainstream' news outlets was influential, I tried to be aware of the general discourse of the election from both the left and the right, and also trace phrases and ideas that came up in conversations both within Labour and on the doorstep. It is important to note that each news outlet has their own agenda and is understood in multifarious ways, but also that there is an agency of the individual in reactions to the national campaign. I wish to explore how those I am studying take up the different discourses. Dittmer (2010) posits that discourse analysis helps researchers understand 'the ways in which knowledge is formulated and validated by society as truth' towards an understanding of interconnectedness and I wish to experiment with it by tying it into my research subjects – people on the door-step,

those within the campaign and my own social group. That meant being aware of texts that garner attention rather than the detail of every single one: being attentive to how things are repeated, what lines, what texts are brought up, how they are shared, with whom, who responds, and so on. This was done through a textual analysis, but rather than seeking 'causal' (who started what), I am seeking the repeated lines, the taken stances, the empathetic and sympathetic language. This illuminates by interlinking this research with my social network research, as one of the most frequent modes of Facebook information dissemination is the sharing of video clips and newspaper articles. I searched for the relationships between the local and national campaigns and the media, as well as the social media relations with the wider population. This analysis was particularly useful in addressing concerns of temporalities and issues around coding.

It was important to use the discourse narratives in understanding the use of social media. While still utilising traditional methods of campaigning – billboards, party political Broadcasts, speeches – Labour's strategy also included using a wealth of new media. The party, leaders, MPs, and many Parliamentary Candidates and volunteers have their own Twitter, Facebook, Instagram (and others) accounts. Each particular media is subject to different sorts of uses and thus different logics. However, the online phenomenon of 'going viral' or 'spreadability' (Lingdren 2015) – the spread of a text through word of mouth and social networks – has become one of importance in campaigning of all sorts (indeed, it has gone viral).

Web 2.0 hinges around user-created and user-shared content. It potentially exposes the relational potential of campaigns, positive as well as negative. Social media has created a space of direct potential conversations between people in direct social spheres – a bus driver can send a tweet to a celebrity like Stephen Fry and there is a chance that he will

respond and they will have a dialogue. Benwell et al. (2012: 406) argue that '[w]hen politicians (or celebrities) use Twitter or Facebook to engage with their fan-base/voters, the distinction between elite and popular political communication breaks down.' This, however, perhaps does not address the different ways social media can be used or how it is received. Problematically, the elite is perhaps still more likely to have someone coming towards them (for instance, in replying to their tweet, maybe), and many Twitter profiles (including political ones) are not based around interaction but the dissemination of material. As I will cover in Chapter 6, during the election the use by those within the party assemblage seemed to approach social media from a top-down idea of information dissemination: often, when the party's official account made a political tweet, many Labour members simply retweet it. Or, other tweets make similar points themselves, disseminate parts of their speeches, or include pictures of candidates and teams out campaigning. Indeed, Labour's campaign guides for 2015 provides a guide on what to tweet and how to phrase it. However, as noted above, social media is utilised by many not simply as information dissemination but as a space of interaction. Thus, the various uses and relationships to social media spaces by those embroiled in party politics is important to this study. Information was collected on Twitter and Facebook through the use of Hootsuite (a social media multi-account management tool), screenshots, and favouriting. These were brought together in a file and uploaded to Evernote and coded.

Through attention to social media I come to understand how the platforms were utilised by those involved in politics, but also what effect they had on the campaign, addressing human touch and viral issues. In other words, how the consideration of these media changes the material practices of campaign videos, speeches, and general information dissemination. As such, I want to 'acknowledge the capacity of "ordinary"

citizens to utilize [...] devices (both technical and affective) to influence opinions' (Pinkerton and Benwell 2014: 20). I was interested in the successes of how the campaign was performed online and constructed for a social media logic, but also how it opens itself up more overtly to being relationally interpreted through such logic. I wanted to see how those 'users' create and relate to the campaign material and thus change its intended affect.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the 2015 Conference, I gathered the data resulting from the research together in order to address the research questions set up in the introduction. As stated above, no one method is meant to answer any one research question, but instead they collectively address my concerns. That said, some methods are more important in some chapters than others. In Chapter 4, on the Conferences, the main source was the diaries, supplemented by discourses in the press and social media. In the chapters focusing on the election campaign (5 and 6) it was both the diaries and the interviews that provided the great bulk of the material, complemented by a knowledge of the discourses taking place. In Chapter 7 (on the leadership campaign) it was the interviews and social media that became crucial.

The eventual body of data to analyse was composed of diaries, notes, campaign material (leaflets, mock newspapers, guides), transcribed interviews, screenshots of internet interactions, websites, newspaper and magazine articles in both physical and digital formats. The diaries and interviews were collated onto the note-taking software Evernote, which allows searching by words within the text (much like the 'find' function on Word that can, instead, scan the entire database) and 'labels' (key theme words with which I coded the interview). In conjunction with this, I also placed the interviews in NVivo, allowing me to

code the material so as to be able to search through all the research methods in a different fashion. Thus, I was able to search the material using different methods.

ETHICS

Obviously, there are a lot of different ethical concerns within political debates and there were heated debates around children's services and care for the disabled and the elderly in Brighton and Hove. However, the discourse around these issues did not play a part of my research and I did not work directly with anybody who is understood to be vulnerable in such a way.

My ethnographic position was to disclose my position to those with whom I was volunteering. Although I have worried about how a political party may take to being researched, particularly during a difficult election period, my position was upfront and I did not experience objection from anyone. My interviewees gave full informed consent. I have sought to ascribe a level of anonymity to them and those door-stepped, by not detailing appearances, suggesting names or revealing the specific areas in which I worked with them. Obviously, anonymity is a hard thing to guarantee amongst a small group of people with a few prominent members, but efforts have been made to preserve this.

Modern social media presents unique problems for theorisations of ethics in social research. For this thesis, the two main sources of online information were the social media spaces of Twitter and Facebook. Each comes with its own variation of ethical issues. Twitter is defined as a 'microblogging' platform, meaning it is 'a combination of blogging and instant messaging' (Nations 2017: n.a.). The blogging broadcasts are disseminated to those who have chosen to 'follow' said broadcaster (as well as some advertisements), and as such the

information becomes public. Where relevant, I have obscured the faces and username of the broadcasters I am quoting.

The use of posts on Facebook is more complex, as it requires a log-in to access information, and as such broadcasts straddle a blurry line between public and private (British Sociological Association 2017). Facebook users are broadcasting (in a similar way to Twitter) to an audience, but that audience can be understood to run the gamut from public to private, and perhaps not specifically either. Facebook is also a space where there are many 'public' profiles, where discussions may happen in 'public.' In these cases the boundaries between the private and public spaces are not clear. I acknowledge that using Facebook broadcasts raises 'new ethical challenges for researchers', as some users consider their posts more private than public (even if they are reposting someone else's broadcast). I have made all efforts at making this information anonymous by removing pictures and names, or altering a quote, and when using an image of the broadcast, I blur out the name and the avatar.

RISK

The main physical activities I undertook were socialising and door knocking with those involved Labour members, either as campaigners, or at conference. I was not alone in these activities, as door knocking happened in groups of four or five, and while there were not always pleasant interactions on the doorstep, they were very few reported cases of violence, and none in my case. I think this was quite a low-risk research project.

PERSONAL POSITIONALITY

The question that this project grew out of was: who and why are people still invested in political parties? This was a result of my interest in politics and my desire to understand why people would continue to participate in the State. My own political convictions are to the left of a representative state, a quasi-anarcho-socialism informed by readings of Gramsci, Kropotkin, The Clash and others and were in place before conceiving and enacting the method, research and analysis of this thesis. This meant that I did not understand why people might vote, let alone volunteer, for a centralist, “mainstream”, political party beyond a ‘anybody but the Tories’ mentality. Indeed, my view could be said to be post-political. The role of assemblage became part of the project before Labour did, and I read a great deal of overlap with various forms of anarchism along with my initial readings of assemblage (this is perhaps not accidental, as some anarchist theorists have been influenced by Deleuze and Guattari (see Newman 2001)).

Labour, however, was not the first political party considered. That honour belongs to UKIP – a populist right-wing party that would have been, I think, fascinating to study. However, my understanding of the project was always one that included participant observation and I felt it would be very uncomfortable to work with that organisation, as well as completely antithetical to my actual electoral desires. I doubted I would be able to access it overtly, and I did not wish to covertly participate in and campaign for an agenda with which I felt so at odds. I felt I could only act on behalf of a party with which I had a modicum of affinity. This meant that studying a right-wing party was not in question.

Labour was an obvious choice. In 2013, Labour appeared to me as the face of a post-political crisis: a “centre left” party which premised itself as a mass party, but seemed a

shadow of its former self. I would argue that my concept of Labour was overcoded in that I felt it was a post-political shell that was no longer the party available in the history books. I read New Labour with an extremely critical eye and felt Ed Miliband came over as odd, agreeing broadly with a joke by the comedian Jeremy Hardy that the reason he looked odd because 'he knows in his heart that capitalism doesn't work. He knows because he was taught that from birth. He rebelled as a young man but has been forced back to the realism of his parents by his experience as climate change secretary if not by the banking fiasco' (Hardy 2011: n.a.). Labour appeared to be amidst an identity crisis: whereas the New Labour leadership was a bunch of neoliberal stooges backed by a misguided membership, Miliband now did not know where to move, let alone how to get there. I was interested in why people remained attached to a system and a party that I (and, at the time, increasingly others) struggled to find value in. I was to study a group with whom I had few ideological and practical political understandings, apart from a shared historical affection for socialism and a personal history of voting. However, the original idea of this PhD was to set me amongst UKIP which I quickly changed to Labour before any proposal was placed. While I wished to study a manifestation of a political party I did not necessarily see eye-to-eye with, I still did not feel comfortable doing a participant observation of an overtly right-wing political party.

During the course of my research, my relationship to Labour changed. While my politics were not transformed, both the people involved in Labour and the multiplicity of positions still held by them helped decode the party for me, both academically and socially. In other words, I was affected and territorialised by the process of experiencing the campaign and its aftermath. It was hard not to enjoy the company of many of the members I worked with, the conversations, and sharing of 'events'. It was difficult not to have some

increasing comradeship. Moreover, the discovery of some internal groups (particularly the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy) that I feel at least a small empathy for, also meant I felt more comfortable than I thought I would. It is generally difficult to keep a distance between oneself and any group one studies ethnographically. Thus, while my politics did not change per se, I did find myself affected by my role in the campaign, and did wish to see at least Hove and Kemp Town become Labour. I certainly wanted to see those council candidates elected, if nothing else. However, while I may have become territorialised by Labour during the campaign, I found myself gaining distance from it during the period of analysis and writing. I did not revert to ideas of Labour as overcoded (as I was becoming more territorialised by assemblage at that point), but found myself critical (if more empathetic) of those inside Labour for their attachment to that party. For me, this is testament to the role that affect can play in an ethnography. I was genuinely upset by the general election result and hopeful of the Corbyn leadership campaign. Before his campaign, I was prepared to renounce my membership. It was his success that means, as this body of work is finished, I remain a member of the party. However, as I will discuss in the conclusion, this is not without reservation, and I am perhaps not that hopeful for the final results of his leadership (more on this in Chapter 8).

A necessary thing to mention is also my role in the local campaign assemblage. I think I was seen as a good door-stepper, and found friendship and warmth from the local leadership, as well as many of the other volunteers. In Chapter 5, I talk about how I felt as I became inducted into Labour, and I also mention that I became a 'board runner'. This role of 'board runner' (telling people what doors to knock on and recording that information), to me, donated a trust in my abilities as a door-stepper, and so they entrusted me with in-the-field organising of those groups. Indeed, I would sometimes be 'picked' by someone (a

council candidate, perhaps) to run their board, to just be part of their door-stepping team. Thus, I perhaps changed the assemblage from what it would otherwise be, but not to the extent that I feel it would expressed itself with any vast difference.

I was not a full supporter of the 2015 Labour manifesto, but few volunteers actually were. It seemed that personal relations and the idea of Labour were in many ways more important than the manifesto. Indeed, as I mention above, part of my interest was why people continued to be part of Labour. In campaigning in Hove, I did genuinely believe that a Labour MP would be better than a Tory one, even one who adhered to a 'New Labour' ideology. One reason I did not want to campaign in Brighton Pavilion was to avoid being part of a campaign to remove the Greens' Caroline Lucas, who I believe has been a good MP thus far. I discovered I was not alone in Labour volunteers who avoided campaigning in Pavilion because of Lucas.

As I conducted a participant observation, rather than simply observing, I feel I have to address how 'open' I was about my own politics with the group. I approached them with a cautious openness, trying to attend to individual relations with the members and figure out how to relate to them. Having had a long-held interest in anarchism, I was already wary of being explicit on that position due to the attitudes it seems to bring forth (generally ideas of unrealistic silliness). As I became more entrenched in the Hove campaign, I relaxed which allowed me a limited freedom of political expression within the group (but not the doorstep). Part of the role of my autoethnography was to address my position within the world of Labour. Indeed, it is part of the research to understand one's self if we are to see the picture from the pixels' perspective.

Lastly, a word about my relationship with the concepts assemblage and affect. These two notions were the conjoined element of this project: where a political party was one, the

other was assemblage and affect. Without either, this thesis would not exist. This does not mean, however, that I was, or indeed *am*, a fully-fledged, flag-waving assemblagist.

Throughout, I have struggle with the language and concepts of assemblage, and felt frustrated with it. While there have been some rather wonderful explorations of it and its potentials, there has been relatively little published use. Assemblage, at least, is a concept that has not been much tested. As I elaborate in the conclusion (Chapter 8), my own relationship with assemblage remains somewhat sceptical.

CHAPTER 4. THE CONFERENCES

On the face of it, the first and last assemblages of Labour that I encountered during my period of research could be seen to be very similar to each other, the one significant difference being that one was held in the Manchester Central Conference Centre in 2014 and the other in the Brighton Centre in 2015. Both conferences featured the same general coded people: MPs, local party representatives, employees of the party, affiliated trade union representatives, fringe organisations, a variety of marketing stalls, the media, and the membership.

However, assemblage ontology leads me to argue that these two conferences were host to different assemblages that related to the election in very different ways. Different temporal events (such as the general election cycles or the flux of the financial system), different leaderships, and the relations between different people produced different expressions of Labour. In other words, any one Labour conference is the “co-functioning” of heterogeneous parts into some sort of provisional, open, whole’ (Anderson et al. 2012: 177) – an assemblage. We can see this in the difference between the leadership components. The 2014 conference featured Ed Miliband as leader of the party making his fourth (and final) speech as leader, his last before the general election. The role of this conference for the media and the national leadership was to introduce that leadership’s desired coding of Labour for the forthcoming campaign and (perhaps) the next government. The 2015 conference, by contrast, was the first conference since the general election and featured the inaugural leadership conference speech by the new party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who had won only weeks earlier. For many different parts of this assemblage, the conference

was supposed to set the tone of the coming year of opposition as well as reflecting on the general election defeat. Thus, each conference featured both repetition and difference, and there were clear purposes for their occurrences (Buchanan 2017).

The annual conference fulfils a multiplicity of functions for the maintenance of Labour. First, there is the consideration of the political calendar (pre- or post-election, etc.). Second, the attendees – the people – hold ‘virtuals’ (ideas and memories) of other conferences that effect how they conduct and ‘perform’ a conference. Third, it provides a formal stage alongside which many informal gatherings take place (i.e. the ‘fringe’ and other social spaces and events), as it is a space of physical encounter between different components where different parts of the wider Labour assemblage come together. It physically occupies particular venues (a conference centre, hotel conference rooms, meeting rooms, and so on) within the host city, coding that space, but also spreads into the area around the formal space. This party assemblage is added to by the intrusive component of the media, which plays a particular role that alludes to a notion of the party conference as a certain kind of performance for someone else (rather than a contained conference, just for those already within the assemblage).

First, I question the supposed purpose for which the conference comes together. Second, I look at the materials and people that were becoming Labour in the conference, asking what and who was Labour at these events, in other words trying to trace the assemblage as an ‘open whole’. Third, I emphasise the theme of the performance of politicians and audience, highlighting the role of the desire for affect in the conference, and I consider the phenomenon of ‘Tory Bashing’ at Labour conferences before looking at the speeches of Ed Miliband, Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonald and Sadiq Khan, with specific reference to their discourse, their bodily performances and their relationship to the

assemblage in the hall. In this, I am trying to address how and why they were performing and for whom. For elections and Labour, I show these conferences play a particularly important role: they bookend the general election and they influence how the campaign plays out and can be understood. It was at these conferences that the party's desired coding of both the campaign and election result was unveiled by the 'leadership', and it was here that the workshops trained people how to use the campaign technology and how to campaign on the door-step. Thus, the conference was a significant performance of the Labour assemblage to a virtual audience – that is, an imagined audience it aspires to affect, that 'potential for connections' (Colebrook 2008: 28) – as well as to those within Labour, itself, as part of the electoral campaign. As such, this chapter's contribution to electoral geography is four-fold: it shows how the party/society divide is performed; it argues for the importance of the conference to an election campaign; it introduces Labour as a multiplicitous, changing, open, assemblage and it questions the audience's role in the conference.

WHO IS THE CONFERENCE?

Here, I want to explore the role of the 'abstract machine' as a computer 'software program' (Patton 2000: 44) of a (human) assemblage that guides its intended becoming. In other words, I'm searching for what Buchanan (2015) stipulates as the necessary purpose of these assemblages. Just as the party changes the abstract machine for the purpose at hand (be it the conference, an election, or to campaign on a policy), the conferences themselves do not always have the same abstract machine. Moreover, during the party's history, the general role of the conference has changed within the party. This has had consequences for the

people that become Labour during the conferences and for its wider purpose within the party, society and the State.

The Labour Party conference is a yearly, autumnal gathering. As I have stated above, it brings together the PLP, with representatives of the CLPs, some of the membership, unions and others. Ingle (2008) argues that in previous incarnations (pre-1994) the conference was important to the federalist structure of the party, where some policy was decided (alongside other policy deciding groups the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the PLP). The said point of the conference – and still the stated objective – is that it brings together the largest body of people ‘coded’ Labour so as to vote on different policies. Bringing together so many different assemblages of the party’s ‘broad church’ to one space to argue over policy, led to the conference being coded by some as a public and somewhat embarrassingly troublesome battleground. Under the internal changes brought about by respective leaderships of, first, Neil Kinnock in the 1980s and then Blair in the 1990s (Thorpe 2001), the Conference’s *raison d’être* changed. Policy was removed to the realm of the (private) National Policy Forum and so ‘[t]he dog days of the 1970s and 1980s, when the many-headed beasts of fundamentalist activism and entryism stalked the nation’s television screens, were replaced by the autumnal respectability of the 1990s and 2000s. Although Labour leaders would deny any such thing, conference is now more or less “under control”’ (Ingle 2008: 89). This change of ‘program’ for the conference went hand-in-hand with what Pettitt (2007: 3) terms the ‘marketisation’ of Labour, a professionalization of the party where they ‘turned to professionals, such as pollsters and PR managers, to help adjust the party’s “product” to make it more appealing to voters.’ Thorpe (2001: 218) argues that this has had the effect of making the conference ‘something more like a rally than a serious exchange of views’. Thus, the conference’s abstract machine – its’ deliberate plan – changed

and the expression of the conference subsequently changed, resulting in a material effect on who turns up for the conference and why people are there. It is now a space to perform the illusion of a 'professionalised' Labour, for the leadership to introduce desired (re)coding, and to try to (re)territorialise people into the Labour assemblage.

However, an assemblage is not simply an expression of the abstract machine but also the relationships between its components. While being aware of the abstract machine, observing Labour as an assemblage means being aware of its continuous multiplicity and that its relations and different components are always becoming. As such, it is not any one thing but the always-changing result of relations in different places and at different times. Thus, next, I shall explore how the conference assemblage territorialised and coded different spaces at different times. I am trying to highlight not just how the conferences functioned, but also what was drawing people to the Labour conferences of 2014 and 2015. To understand the conference as simply a scripted performance is to look solely at what is delivered in the main hall of the conference centre and not at what is happening in the rest of the spaces outside.

THE SPACE OF THE CONFERENCE

In considering something an 'open whole', one of the question of the party through assemblage is a question of who and what is part of the assemblage and who is not. When I arrived at the 2014 conference, it became apparent that the 'components' (for instance, people, spaces, materials) that make up the conferences are not just those representatives and members who turn up for the meetings and big speeches. Instead, these assemblages can be understood as a multiplicity of different technologies, virtuals, materials, as well as

people with varied relations to the party serving different roles that are (be)coming together. Moreover, just because an assemblage has an abstract machine with a purpose that brings it together (Buchanan 2015), it may produce or become differently from that abstract machine. This is the Labour conference as not just a 'living arrangement' (Buchanan 2015: 385), but also that it was not being contained by its abstract machine. So, while the leadership may have desired function for the conference to perform, these other components of the assemblage influenced how the conference was expressed, how it might affect a body. It was an assemblage that defied clear boundaries despite evidence of an insistence – physical and mental – that there was one.

The main venue for these conferences are large conference spaces within a city. This space is coded with certain 'formal and rigid rules' (DeLanda 2006: 15) as Labour, specifically the large halls where speeches take place and a large space full of stalls marketing different affiliations, causes and products. There are also cafes and a space that the media (particularly the BBC) occupy, broadcasting the daily events, conducting interviews and interpreting the events and speeches. The area territorialised by the assemblage, however, is much wider, spilling out from the conference centre into auxiliary buildings, including rooms within town halls and hotels. The 'fringe' runs alongside the official lists of speeches, motions and informal meetings and consists of (more) speeches, gatherings, panels, informal meetings and so on. If we keep on following this blurred line, we might ask where does this assemblage stop, as it do not form a 'seamless whole' (DeLanda 2006: 4)? Should we include the stalls, where companies, socialist societies, charities, and others, meet the 'party', giving them glimpses of products, or advertising and canvassing for causes? In Manchester in 2014, the stalls were set out in an open hall. By contrast, the stalls at the Brighton Centre in 2015 were a maze set out over two floors and flowing into

different rooms. This is not because there were more stalls but because the Centre does not have the room for a unified space. These different spaces constructed different relations with the stalls and their offerings: in Brighton interaction was optional and intentional; in Manchester, it was inevitable. Thus, exposure to some causes was limited whilst, for example, the Honda stall was so placed that it met the eye every time on entering the Manchester conference. The stalls held the members of the party as the audience, particularly those people that were coded as official, rather than membership. The companies present in these stalls were trying to achieve a familiarity, a territorialisation of empathy within Labour whilst other groups, such as socialist groups, museums, and charities, were trying to territorialise different parts of Labour by appealing to a code of it as a socialist party.

And, what of the spaces occupied by the conference goes outside the official sections: the coffee shops, restaurants, pubs, bars, clubs, Airbnb rooms that are subject to the overflow and after-hour parties? These had a direct impact on how the assemblage territorialised different components, including bodies. In Manchester, I shared an Airbnb flat with a grumpy MP candidate for a constituency in the east, and a staff member of a northern Labour constituency who befriended me and introduced me to a meeting of the left-wing inner-party organisation, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD). Thus, my introduction to the Labour conference assemblage was prior to the official conference and outside the conference centre. The CLPD meeting was my first experience of being territorialised by any part of Labour, as I discovered a Labour group whose politics and aims I sympathised with, (and again) it went on outside the conference centre, and during the evening before the conference.

Moreover, the security staff, the hotel staff, the service personnel, the receptionists and the occasional protest outside, may be included in a definition of who is becoming Labour at these conferences. And what about considering the materials: the Public Announcement (PA) systems, the rooms themselves, the banners, magazines, flyers, smart phone applications, the living rooms in which BBC broadcast coverage was watched and listened to and the spaces where print of the conference was manifested and read? Materials can hold important agency in the performance of Labour. The lack of a lectern in Miliband's speech in 2014 was supposed to hold several meanings, including removing the barrier between him and the audience, and showing that he was confident in his ability to memorise an hour-long speech. Thus, he was trying to become coded 'prime ministerial' through the lack of a lectern. Materiality (or, in this case, immateriality) this contributed to the performance of hierarchy. The national leadership and panel set up on the main stage created a spectacle and spectator divide, both within the party and without.

Where, then, does the assemblage physically stop? There was a remarkable difference between the over-brimming coffee chain just outside the conference centre and the relatively quiet and the empty independent coffee shop a five-minute walk away that I went to. Through assemblage, then, the conference appeared to spread out, chaotically, through the area surrounding the conference centre. It is not everywhere always but a dynamic and always fluxing spread that, in many cases, defies clear boundaries. During the evenings, the conference components move away from the conference centre, towards hotel rooms, pubs, restaurants and other areas suitable for social gathering (and, I am sure, some not). All these things helped to shape the becoming of the assemblage. In the light of these considerations, the abstract machine appears an important component, but just a component, nonetheless.

Despite the sporadic spread of this assemblage, there was a material performance of the clear separation between the 'inner' Labour assemblage (those actively involved in the political and social aspect of the conference) and the wider city, physically manifested by security barriers. These components use (what has been termed, 'fortress architecture', hemming in the conference centre by use of a metal barrier, and so separating it from the rest of the town. Coaffee (2004: 201), remarking on the technology developed in central Belfast, Northern Ireland, 'where "fortress architecture" and principles of "defensible space" were used, by the security forces, to territorially control designated areas', otherwise known as 'the ring of steel'. He concludes by wondering if these structures are, in fact, 'rings of exclusion' (Coaffee 2004: 209).

I experienced something similar at the conference in Manchester. When entering either of the official conference spaces, I was confronted by a manned heavy metal turnstile. This was the only opening of a barrier that ran all the way around the entrance and confronts anyone who attempts to enter. The only way in is to pass through the guards, who scan an ID badge and rummage through bags. Once within the conference space, there is therefore segregation from the non-authorized personnel on the outside, or the "general public". I agree with Coaffee's argument as this felt like an exclusionist space, surrounded by people with badges. In terms of assemblage, I argue that this is a material manifestation of the virtual notion of the Labour/society split. The assemblage 'officially' closes its doors to society through its actions on stage, through the lens of the media, even if it struggles to physically maintain it as components spill out into the wider city.

The agency invested in materials was more than just the barriers as it was also in the identifications and invitations given out for the conference. This was also enacted through the badges given to the attendees. In a similar way that Crang (Crang and Cook 2007) gained

access to trade unionists because of his Labour members card, it was through this badge that I was invited to the CLPD meeting. It also granted me a limited entrance into the general security area(s). For instance, for Miliband's leadership speech, there was be a ticket per-person at the conference. Entrance into the hall would not happen without this ticket. Yet, the theatre in which Miliband's speech happened could not contain the number of people queueing to get in. This long queue, which reached around the block, in combination with the looming general election, gave a heightened tension and a sense of anticipation to the speech, as people considered whether to give up and watch it somewhere else.

The conference badges themselves were coded differently, and thus created different forms of access to areas (coloured differently depending on the association to the party), and so create a hierarchy within the assemblage. Representatives and Labour MPs were guaranteed a place at the speech, whereas a mere member such as myself, had to wait in line. Having a badge that stipulated that I was just a member also restricted my access to different areas. It forced me to queue for other meetings and meant that some corporate stalls took no interest in me. My badge coded me as a spectator, wondering stall to stall, in out and out of speeches, meetings, fringe events and tutorials on door-stepping, and so on. Any real 'official' business went on behind closed doors: whereas this was once a public decision-making body, it was now not. This was an actual and material performance of a virtual notion (that 'may exist in only in our heads, or paper' (Buchanan 2010: n.a.)) that the Labour assemblage is closed, that those who embody the party assemblage are somehow separate from society, not *of* it, but in *addition* to it. Even the members were separated from much official party business, a material display of the virtual party hierarchy.

PEOPLE

Who are these people who are separating themselves from the rest of society? Who was coded Labour? In the different scheduled meetings of the conferences, I witnessed two broad groups: the leadership, and the audience. In this context, the leadership applies to both those who organised the conference and meetings, and also to those MPs who dominated the schedule, such as the leader of the party. However, I also witnessed that the conference was more fluid in its set-up in some spaces, that it was social with the familiarity of an inside-crowd talking to one another, greeting old friends, colleagues, and so on. These people were evidently already coded and territorialised Labour. Despite my badge opening this door, the social aspect of Labour for the most part remained closed, as admitting to being a 'researcher' closed some conversations quickly. It did not seem apparent that there were many 'general' members of the party, such as myself: most of those milling around seemed to have formal links beyond their individual membership cards.

To the more established figures, the conference becomes a social occasion. Indeed, conferences used to be known for the consumption of alcohol (James 2016), although this has been downplayed since the aforementioned professionalization. Labour blogger Emma Burnell said at a panel during the 2015 conference (and elsewhere, such as on BBC Radio4 [Burnell 2013]), "let's face it, we're *weird*." In this, she argued that 'we' at the conference were weird because we chose to be part of this assemblage and spend our time and money within it – something most people do not do, especially in a "post-political" State. The divide is getting bigger between politics and society, she continued, as less and less people spend their time on politics. The major difference between those who embody the Labour assemblage and those who were serving at the conference was that many of the former

were interested in it and had chosen to involve themselves within it. This was an acknowledgement of the actual performance of the virtual of a closed Labour, despite the materiality of this particular meeting being in a conference room in a hotel outside of the security barriers.

Within these two assemblages (of the larger Labour assemblage), there was potential for crossovers as someone chairing one meeting could easily become a member of the audience in another. This is a display of the potential fluidity of hierarchy. And yet this is also a simplification since while the purpose of the abstract machine might have been to show a rally to the media, there was much that went on outside the spotlight of the media. The conference also remained a place where different groups met and hashed out agendas.

There was an influential component to this assemblage: the news media. Although I overheard one man at the 2014 conference half-jokingly referring to them as “the enemy”, the media is an integral part of the Labour assemblage during the conferences. Indeed, they played an essential role in that their reportage allows an inside view of the physical barrier, sanctioning (albeit selectively and mediated) entry to those who would have been denied it. This was the party introduced to society with the media as gatekeeper. Their presence helped to code what those outside the physical assemblage understand as to what was going on within the conference: they coded key spaces within the conference hall and stall space, transmitting speeches and interviews and interpreting the conference on TV, online, and in print. Materially, they coded an important space in the foyer outside the main hall in which they would hold public interviews with politicians coded ‘Labour’. They infiltrated other spaces, becoming active in the becoming of the assemblage: some media groups (The Mirror Group, *New Statesman*, *The Guardian*) hosted meetings, conversations and parties where the leadership was witnessed. The conference was not simply where different

representations of Labour would meet, but also a space where the media played out its perceived role as reporting on the party to an external society. Perhaps this was the gap that Burnell (2013: n.a.) commented on, the ‘weird’ people of politics – their involvement in a fringe interest in this system of State.

The various relations components had with one another helped create another sort of assemblage, different from the policy-making conferences of former times, and the of *just* the rallies of the Blair era (Ingle 2008). It is through the consideration of materials and people that we must consider the other assemblages that were witnessing the becoming of the Labour party conferences. Perhaps because of the membership badge, while I was an audience to the Labour Party’s unique assemblages both in 2014 and 2015, I was not the audience to whom the conference was really performed. The main conference space hosted a display by representatives of different parts of the parties to the media, who was the real intended audience. The conference was more complex than its supposed abstract machine, and it served multiple purposes for multifarious actors. And yet, the overall reason the assemblage amassed, was to perform Labour in particular ways. We can see this in the next section, which looks at how the assemblage became differently through the leadership speeches.

MANCHESTER 2014 VS BRIGHTON 2015

The atmosphere of the conferences varied depending on a plethora of things. One issue was that of the parliamentary context. For instance, an important influence was that the 2014 conference was held under a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government which had recently survived a Scottish Independence referendum that saw the coalition and

Labour Party campaigning together. By contrast, the 2015 conference was clouded by the first majority Conservative government since New Labour came to power in 1997. What is more is that Jeremy Corbyn won the leadership election earlier in the month. Thus, the 2014 event can be understood as a Labour Party conference becoming for a general election under the same leader it had had for the past four years and in relation to New Labour, the coalition government, and so on; while in the 2015 Conference, Labour was becoming in reaction to that defeat, but also with a new leadership trying to (re)code the party.

These issues had crucial effects on not only the schedule of the conferences, but also the performances of Labour. In this section, I look at the blurred lines of conscious performances of being Labour, and how they relate to the desire for affective moments, as well as some affective moments themselves. These moments territorialised those present into Labour, potentially making the assemblage more cohesive and producing boundaries from the outside world as a social space. To highlight this, in this section I first attend briefly to the role 'Tory bashing' had at the conferences. I then examine some of the discursive and embodied dimensions of the speeches by Miliband, Corbyn, McDonnell and Sadiq Khan, looking for the affects swirling around the speeches by the party leader as the focal point of the conference. Leadership speeches are keenly anticipated, for they introduce the leadership's desired code for the party and therefore what the party will try to emphasise as policy over the coming 'season.' Since they are so pivotal, much attention is paid to them, to the extent that the conference 'stops' when they happen. For both leadership speeches in the two conferences I attended, the queues began around two hours before the event, and there are always contingency plans for overflow since these are the centrepieces. This speaks of the potential agency that can be invested in them.

‘Tory bashing’ is the term given to moments when someone at the conference verbally abuses or attacks the Conservative Party, in whatever form. It seemed to play an important part of performing Labour in these spaces, and needless to say, the history of Labour party conferences is replete in ‘Tory Bashing’ to the extent that one could almost call it a game. Perhaps there was once a bodily revulsion, an affective disgust of these virtual Tories. Tory bashing, after all, is one of Labour’s affective traditions as a party, as Bevan’s famous line from 1948, that ‘they are lower than vermin’ (Bevan 1948: n.a.) attests. Tory bashing was a sort of ‘code’ for Labour, one of those rituals that one should perform.

In 2014 and 2015, this game was played by almost every speaker on the podium in the main hall. However, the performance reaches beyond that speaker, and the crowd is obliged to applause it, occasionally cheering. In many occurrences, I did not think it was an affect: it was acted-out, a ‘way-of-being’ Labour, an established code that had developed over the course of many conferences and meetings. Yet, in some of the fringe events, particularly those on the left of the party, there was a genuine affective venom towards Conservatives. This Tory-bashing was intensive. In contrast to those performing the ‘way-of-being’ of a Labour politician, a 90-year-old man in a wheel chair, describing the destitution he grew up in and what the welfare State meant to him clearly expressed the disgust in his Tory-bashing. Mouffe (2014: 125) argues that confrontation in representative democracies is ‘a battle between non-negotiable moral values or essentialist forms of identifications’. This, Springer (2016: 103) writes is because representative democratic choices become an ‘us versus them’ situation where ‘the “them” can only be defined as moral, economic, and juridical enemies, or enemies of reason, making “them” a “savage them” rather than

legitimate adversaries.’ Thus, Tory-bashing derives from the logic of the representative State, and becomes an important performance for a Labour politician: through Tory bashing they code themselves Labour and link their bodies with the history of the party. This ‘way of being’ Labour is further evidence of a party performing itself as away from other assemblages of society, including possibly society (an actual performance of the virtual), itself.

THE ROLE OF THE DESIRE FOR AFFECT IN LEADERSHIP SPEECHES

As Labour’s candidate for London mayor, Sadiq Khan, came off the podium to a standing ovation in 2015, I thought it was clear that the role of the conference speech for politicians is theatre. During the speech, his body language seemed confused, his rhetoric was unnatural, and, after, the standing ovation felt forced. The speech itself was constructed to hit certain notes at certain points and performed a certain way of being a politician. This was clear by the kinds of language used and the physical delivery of the speech. There was an obvious desire to be affective, to have positive bodily reactions in the audience. Khan spelt out the tropes of being a working-class son of a bus driver from south London. He tied his validity to London’s council estates and State schools, marking out the opportunities of the city: “London gave my family and me the opportunity to fulfil our potential. I’m determined to give all Londoners the same opportunities that our city gave me” (Khan 2015). This discourse was meant to deliver the codes that he was a humble, hard-working, aspirational, family man from a London council estate who had made it and he wanted everyone in London to be able to do the same. This was his becoming-mayor story. After this, there was a planned pause from Khan, waiting for an applause from the audience. They

did so, politely. His performance of a politician went further than his language, into his body. For instance, instead of pointing he pressed his thumb against his forefinger. He was performing a particular concept of a politician. We can see this 'politician' rise out of the professionalization of Labour: Thrift (2004: 66) has argued that 'political presentation conforms increasingly to media norms of presentation which emphasise the performance of emotion as being an index of credibility.' However, while perhaps apt for 2004, and that may have also been Khan's desire, in contrast to the new leadership at this conference, his speech presented a crisis in this style of politician. Page and Dittmer (2016: 76-77) have built on Connolly's theory of a resonance machine saying that 'a politician's affective power rests in the ability to embody at least some of their audience's desires' and take it further by arguing that it is Donald Trump's 'way-of-being in the world, and not policy, that draws supporters to him.' I thought Khan sounded like Miliband had in the previous year, from the same 'school' – the same mannerisms, the same tempo and tone of delivery, in other words the same 'politician' style – as though it had been taught. As the crowd stood to applaud at the end of his ten-minute speech, what was not clear was how the audience took to this speech, how it affected them. I argue that Khan had learnt a particular 'way of being' a politician, an established code for want of an affective practice, reflecting the resonance of Blair on British politics, but did not quite manage to convincingly embody it in a space where this was being challenged. These speeches were central to the abstract machine of the conference.

Moreover, Khan was not alone in his performance of this 'way-of-being'. I posit that the audience were performing as well – the audience had established a code, a 'formal and rigid' (DeLanda 2006: 16) performance. As such, the conference assemblage-in-attendance is part of the performance, rather than simply being a receptacle of affect. While a 'rally'

suggests an audience being affected, the genuine feeling running through the crowd in conference is harder to understand. It is the duty of the conference crowd to perform in the right places: this is made clear by the awkward pauses sometimes left in speeches when clapping does not occur. It is also made clear by an almost obligatory standing ovation for any prominent speaker in a show of solidarity and support. What are considered important moments of a speech are not necessarily felt so by the audience, even if they are applauded, audible in the differences between spontaneous applause and smaller, quieter ones. Speeches are peppered with key phrases and the audience can tune out until those phrases. This lends some weight to the accusation that, as Ingle (2008) argues, the conference is a rally. However, I argue that the audience performance goes further than simply being for the media: it is perhaps a performance for the audience, in and of itself. The assemblage of the party becomes part of the theatre to itself, as much as anybody else. Rather than being able to express itself at the conference, it is hemmed in by the role the conference plays within the political calendar.

2014

Ed Miliband's final conference speech as leader was intended to perform a very specific role. It was supposed to sum up a party that was anticipating power. However, comments circulated that the feeling of the conference was very lacklustre, without much excitement or energy. As I have said, the speech itself, like the conference, was meant to recode Labour through the up-coming campaign discourse and territorialise him as a leader of the party to the assemblage and as potential Prime Minister. It was peppered with phrases that were soundbites for the media, as well as playing to the crowd. He had memorised the speech

and spoke for an hour, he pointed with his thumb (like Khan would a year later), and emphasised points meant for clapping and media sound-biting. His theme was “we are better together” (Miliband 2014), tying the Scottish referendum to the general election and showing the way forward to victory. The speech also had hiccups, such as clapping interrupting a sentence that led to “friends, in eight months’ time, we’re going to call time on this way of running the country, because you’re on your own ...” This was supposed to end: “because you’re on your own doesn’t work for you, it doesn’t work for your family, it doesn’t work for Britain.” This was a minor infraction between the audience and the leadership, but it reveals how small mishaps sometimes shape the actual speech as it is being delivered. However, perhaps more pertinent for this thesis was the role of the audience.

The audience played their part. He came and went with a standing ovation, they clapped at key points, and even laughed at some moments. There were two notable aspects to the position of the audience at the Conference. First, it had the aforementioned role as one of the performers in-front of the wider assemblage observing the conference from the outside. The audience itself was trying to perform an affective practice as part of the conference-speech assemblage. The other aspect was that there was an intensive sense of anticipation, of willing the speaker to do well. Even if an audience performs for that speaker there is still a difference between a speech that resonates with an audience and one that does not. That is not to say that in this case, it was an audience that was a void of affect, as it was one humming with anticipation and expectation, hoping Miliband would ‘come good’, and deliver a speech that would justify his leadership, and defy his nay-sayers.

I witnessed Miliband’s speech on a TV, sitting on the floor in a crowded and temporary room outside the main block, where there was to be an immediate reaction

panel afterwards. I noted at the time that I thought the speech was “good, impressive, but not amazing. There was no rabbit-in-the-hat moment [...] the carpet remained in place underneath.” I was not affected very deeply by it. The three-person panel immediately afterwards showed more or less unity in arguing that it was an okay speech, with *The Guardian* columnist Rafael Behr arguing that it was okay, but lacked punch. It did what was required, but no more, no less. The party was satisfied and there was no real concern. The leader and the Labour body had performed the coded ‘way of being’ of a political party gearing up for a general election. A blog post uploaded the next day onto *Prospect* magazine’s website, argued that ‘Miliband has laid out “Labour’s plan for Britain” and it isn’t disastrous, but he could have done more’ (Lowe 2014). At the time, it appeared as if this was the accepted understanding of the speech, at least within the conference milieu.

It is the reaction to this speech that leads me back to the notion of Labour and its ‘enemy’, the media, as this is where the speech soon became a disaster. This is where the factor of the media component was important within this conference assemblage and this is where the Labour leadership’s coding was disputed. While those who populated the conference felt it was alright even if they were relatively unenthused by the speech, it was the media which wrestled with its coding. A day after, the speech was in the papers for not having mentioned the issues of the deficit or immigration, an admission Miliband would eventually own up to (he forgot those sections because of a lack of teleprompters). And this is what the speech subsequently became coded as: one interviewee during my fieldwork recalled it as “disastrous”, and partly to blame for the loss of the general election.

This highlights the question of what is within and what is outside the assemblage (the open-whole)? The concern of the leadership and the body of the conference is the presentation and performance of the party to a wider, potentially territorializable,

assemblage, and this had become increasingly important as Miliband acknowledged there was a problem talking to people outside Westminster. However, we should not understand the immediate reactions as facts of history: these reactions do not set in stone the relational 'meaning' of an event. It is, rather, how the issues that result from an event resonate further down the line and continue to resonate. Thus, while the abstract machine of an assemblage – its 'deliberate realisation of a distinct plan' (Buchanan 2015: 385) – may have been to begin spreading the manifesto of the 2015 Labour campaign, this is not necessarily the line of flight that is produced from it. Instead what is revealed is that 'social entities will be characterised [...] not only by their properties but also their capacities [...] by what they are capable of doing when they interact with other social entities' (DeLanda 2006: 7). In this case, through a line of flight, the assemblage Miliband's speech entered into, through its relations to the media and general election, meant that its coding was something other than the 2014 conference Labour assemblage desired.

2015

The feeling of the 2015 conference was remarkably different from that of 2014. On one hand, it was remarkable in that this was a conference on the back of a fresh defeat and possibly facing another five years of Tory rule. In some conventional respects, it was an average conference with the assemblage on the face of it presenting as nominally the same, despite the replacement of the leadership. It had pretty much the same stalls, the same cross section of the membership, and the same PLP: it was still a place where the MPs met representatives of unions, the CLP and some of the local membership. On the other hand, the importance of the change in leadership had a real affect, despite no structural changes

having been pursued – Jeremy Corbyn had just been elected and his shadow cabinet had just been announced. They had not yet tried to recode Labour, while they had managed to territorialise a large part of its current body through the leadership contest. However, it was evident that some members responded with a feeling of liberation. This was especially true where the ‘left’ of the party gathered or vocalised: for instance, at that year’s CLPD meeting (which I described as a “Jeremy love affair” in my notes) there was a party atmosphere, a jollity, a genuine cheer at the mention of Corbyn. This feeling spread into some other spaces. Within the main hall itself, in between the speeches, interested parties could comment on a bill within the conference (there was some nominal voting), and there was a sense from them of being unleashed. Again, my diary notes that “the mood is markedly different from last year – it’s more relaxed, more upbeat, there’s a bit of a buzz. It’s also expectant and chaotic.” Union members would mention the new leadership during their speeches, and cheers would go up. This feeling spilt over into the speeches by Corbyn and McDonald, as it felt there were certain spaces within the hall willing them to perform well. Thus, the intensity of mood presented a somewhat different assemblage with a different attitude.

Both Corbyn and McDonnell’s speeches received warm ovations. When they both walked out on the first day of conference they received a standing ovation. Perhaps this was predictable, part of the ‘code’ of being the audience, but I felt that this was a change in the balance between theatre and genuine feeling. As the union members took to the podium, it was as if they had been unshackled, unleashed from years of having to police themselves. In McDonnell’s speech, there were moments of spontaneous applause (more than he was planning for) and people uttering agreement with him throughout. Corbyn’s speech lasted just over an hour, and received five standing ovations, despite (or because of?) its slightly

erratic tone. The warmth towards him was palpable from some (although an organiser on one of the fieldwork spaces seemed to be nervous, rather than enthusiastic). The argument of Corbyn's (2015b) speech was that he was not politics as usual, saying "[f]irst and foremost it's a vote for change in the way we do politics. In the Labour Party, and in the country. Politics that's kinder, more inclusive. Bottom up, not top down. In every community and work place, not just Westminster." In this, Corbyn was attempting to distance himself from the way-of-being of Miliband, Blair, and New Labour more generally, promising to recode Labour away from the marketization it had been under. He did not perform the thumb gestures or affect the same tone and speech style as Khan or Miliband had. However, there was still some performance from the audience. The last ovation was a very long lasting one and I noted that it felt as if it went on too long, that it was a bit too rapturous, almost if those who kept it going were making a point. I felt the affective excitement had spilt over into a somewhat conscious performance by the audience by the end, giving it a false length from what was first a burst of excitement.

Thus, Corbyn and McDonnell embodied alternative ways of being a politician from Miliband and Khan. This was shown to some extent in how the speeches were anticipated, and were received. The reception of the speech by Jeremy Corbyn was markedly differently from the reception of the speech by Sadiq Khan, or indeed that of Miliband the previous year. Khan and Miliband were trying to embody something different from McDonnell and Corbyn.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have argued that the 2014 Manchester and 2015 Brighton conferences were two difference performances and expressions of the Labour assemblage. 'By connecting operations to a materiality, instead of imposing a form upon a matter', as Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 476) put it, I have tried to draw out how the assemblage is constructed to perform a specific iteration of Labour. Part of this is shown through the material, which is the result of the virtual, where Labour is a separate entity from society, creating a physical performance through the coding of badges and space through rings of exclusion. At the same time, I have revealed that the spaces territorialised by Labour were not necessarily just those coded spaces, but cafes, restaurants, pubs, hotel rooms, and so on. In this way, it adhered to being an 'open-whole'. In addition to this is the component of the media, performing as an interpreter between society and the party. In this space, the 'weird' people could perform the party for themselves, as well as the media and the people at home. The assemblage at the conference, then, is not simply those people but the intensity of the assemblage and the material that enables that performance.

I have also shown how the conference in the electoral calendar is a critical moment, both before and after the election. As such, the election is present in both conferences, as is it in the election result itself. It is here that the party begins its election campaign performance. Thus, viewing the party as always becoming, it changes due to the context of the occasion. As such, in 2014, the conference was attempting to code Labour for the general election campaign, both for those within Labour as well as those outside it. Miliband and the other MP speakers presented the code of the electoral campaign, attempting to embody it in order to begin territorialising people into the wider Labour assemblage. In

2015, by contrast, conference talked about the meaning of these events – the result of the general election and the leadership contest – to this assemblage. I argue that it was not just the people and materials that effect the becoming of the campaign, but also the temporal elements.

Yet, it was not just the leadership who were performing as the party but the body (the in-house conference audience) that was performing its dutiful role, as well. Both desired to be affected positively, and to produce positive affects as a result of the event, in very conscious ways. I might argue that, contra to the MP John Cruddas (2016) who argued that Labour did not ‘convince’ voters around rational issues such as the economy, Labour did not induce positive affects in voters – it fell flat. I have shown that that the theatre of both conferences was for itself, not just for the media and those watching the media. While the audience had a duty to perform, they also invested affect in Labour. They desired that Miliband succeed and they were hoping to be willed into an enthusiasm, however neither the leadership nor the body could muster much enthusiasm at the conference in 2014.

The 2015 conference was supposed to be the sign of what was to come for the Labour party under Corbyn, to establish the leadership’s intended line-of-flight, its desire to become a majority in parliament. It was to come to grips with the defeat at the general election and it was to signpost how the new leadership wished the party to be, so as to territorialise new voters into it, at least at the ballot box. It was a chaotic conference but one with a thrill running through it. Those who were territorialised by the Corbyn leadership seemed to have an enthusiasm and an easy smile, whereas some of those who felt more comfortable with the previous leadership, like Khan, may have displayed a confusion of ‘how to be’ in this assemblage. The new leadership performed a different way of being, showing that ‘embodying’ a politician did not have one style, that the ‘way of being’ political

as becoming. Khan seemed to be unsure of how to pitch himself given that he is uncomfortable with the all-out socialist rhetoric from which Corbyn and McDonnell could pick at will. Again, the audience played their part, but they also seemed to vibrate with an enthusiasm not there in the previous year.

In this chapter I have sought a new ground for both electoral and political geography. By 'cutting' Labour at these two conferences, I observed the party to be an open-whole, becoming in relation to (both before and after) the 2015 general election. These assemblages, then, are related, but different. In the next chapter, I examine how a local Labour assemblage became the campaign. This is a move away from the focus on the national leadership, towards the people and local leaderships. While the 2014 conference affected the campaign, and set a certain mood for the campaign assemblage, it also produced the coding of the campaign that the local efforts were to develop as the campaign went on. It was at the conference that the abstract machine for the campaign was unveiled, with all the parliamentary candidates selected and present. The abstract machine was in the training workshops on door-stepping, the positioning of the leadership speeches and the expectation of the media in what the conference was to 'perform'. Through these techniques and tools which I bring into focus, I draw out the affect of the campaign on the campaigners, as the leadership became background to the local campaign.

CHAPTER 5. "A MACHINE MASQUERADING AS A MOVEMENT": THE LABOUR DOOR-STEP CAMPAIGN

During the last few weeks running up to the election, there was an 'end of term' feeling floating around the campaigners in Hove. While we had been strangers four months earlier, gingerly manoeuvring around each other, we were now hardened volunteers who quickly turned to one another and asked, "what will you do when it's over?" It was an inside joke that suggested we did not have a life outside of the campaign, a testament as to how intense it had been for some and how much of one's life it seemed to occupy. One activist suggested they might try and relax, another was going on holiday, a third was going to clean their flat for the first time since getting involved. We had collectively obsessed over the campaign during our time in it: we had talked about and been affected by the polls (one local poll that told us we were winning was particularly buoying), the leadership, local politics, and so on. We had been knocking on doors in near-freezing temperatures and sweated walking up hills on days when everybody seemed out due to the sunny weather and door-stepping had seemed a waste of time. We had door-stepped near our own homes and discovered other areas of the town we had not previously explored. We talked about our own politics, the town's politics, and even a local pub's politics. For us, at least, the campaign had been an event in and of itself, we had been affected by it. While some of us had been building up to the general election for a year or more, some of those we spoke to on the door-step did not realise there was one. By the end, we were not strangers any longer and had reached an understanding of one another, an intimacy and a rapport.

Between our performances on the doorsteps and our conversations with each other, we had become coded and territorialised as Labour.

The afternoon after the election results were announced, I walked to a pub in Hove, about half an hour from where I had stayed during the fieldwork. By the time I was there, it was heaving with people and I was greeted from all directions by familiar faces with whom I had spent the last four months canvassing. There was a mixed atmosphere – despite having won Hove, the city's two other constituencies, the rest of the south, and the country, had not gone our way. The subject of conversation was obvious: what had happened? We thought the campaign was okay and Miliband seemed to have turned a corner. But, “Jesus! What was that thing about carving the pledges into stone? Who thought that was a good idea?” For us, the polls had suggested little, if anything, of the final result, and were a focus of particular ire. Another major talking point was what the Conservative majority meant, particularly for the NHS. When the successful MP finally walked in, there was a loud cheer: we had done our bit, he had done his. But what had happened everywhere else?

The people who were enrolled in the local Labour campaign assemblage in Hove may be coded in certain ways. Despite a few variations, they were mostly older, white, and generally working class or value-driven middle-class professionals (such as teachers, nurses, social workers, and so on). These volunteers were components in the Labour assemblage who ‘went out’ onto the doorstep, and performed the campaign instructions that came from the hierarchy. As such, these codes do not tell us about their relationship with the Labour leadership, or how the local Labour campaign was becoming during the election run-up. They do not tell us why we were joking with one another while volunteering or why we were in the pub celebrating our bittersweet victory. To try to illuminate these issues, in this chapter I show how Labour is maintained and performed in space through the bodies of the

local party assemblage, and is becoming through a multiplicity of changing relationships. By examining how the assemblage came together and how the events of, and people in, the campaign tried to produce the 'deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan' (the abstract machine, Buchanan 2015: 385), I deconstruct the solid appearance of the party and hierarchy.

As such, I focus on the experience of the local campaign assemblage. I do this by investigating the local and national leadership's intended structure, and their relationship with technology and *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook* (which I argue is the local leadership's guide to the abstract machine) and contrasting that with the lived experience of the campaign. First, I examine how the local campaign team came about, looking at the structure and relationship between the national and local leaderships, and describe the intended hierarchy. I argue that the relationship between the local and national campaigns was based around a franchise model. Second, I consider the role of the 'organiser' in the local campaign and their relationship to the abstract machine. Third, I look at the role of 'Contact Creator', the piece of technology at the centre of the campaign. For this analysis, I argue that Neil Postman's theory of 'technopoly' is insightful. Fourth, I review the instructions for the door-steppers and, fifth, some of the experiences of performing those. Sixth, I investigate issues around the coding of the material that we gathered, and find some of the issues inherent with the campaign technology. Seventh, and lastly, I explore how intensive 'events' can affect the becoming of assemblage, helping to re-shape the assemblage, suggesting how people are territorialised and coded into it.

Throughout, I build on my overarching argument that the importance of the election is more than simply its result, specifically looking at the intensities within the local Labour campaigns. I argued in Chapter 2 that the election is a 'Deleuzian event' (Beck and Gleyzon

2017: 329): as such, in this chapter I try to understand some of those affective forces circulating in and around the election and which shaped the campaign's becoming. To reiterate, the focus is on a local Labour party as a singular expression, but one that relates to the conferences that bookended the fieldwork (Chapter 4), and the subsequent Labour leadership contest (Chapter 7). I am also attempting to contribute to electoral geography and the blurring of P-/p- politics by highlighting a small part of the experience of a campaign, done through the peopling of Labour and directly questioning (as I did in Chapter 4) the party/society divide.

THE TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED CAMPAIGN

The purpose of this section is to explore the structure of the assemblage, to determine those who were coded as the local Labour campaign by both the national leadership as well as the local party. The three local campaigns had their own variation of hierarchy, and each was performed differently. There were some 'formal and rigid' (DeLanda 2006: 16) coded roles however, ordained by the Labour leadership and embraced by the local party. Fox and Alldred (2015: 402) argue that 'the processual character of assemblage undermines any conception of a determining social structure [... as such] the exercise of power or control [...] must be explored as socially and spatiotemporally specific occurrences within continual and continuous flows of affect and assemblage.' As such, this first section is an exploration of the leadership's desired structure of the assemblage.

As I became familiar with the local campaign, it became clear that there was a hierarchy being acted out by the people involved in the Hove campaign. At the top was the parliamentary candidate as the leader with a team of advisors, enabled by two (sometimes

three) organisers. This was the leadership. Council candidates submitted to this hierarchy; while they were potentially independent in their actions, they were dependent on the MP campaign for funds, posters, leaflets, information and support. At the bottom were the volunteers, where there was a hierarchy of itself, generally in relation to familiarity with both the leadership and the technology used to organise door-stepping, as well as to the amount of time someone could give to the campaign. To accept this setup as natural would be to ignore how it emerges from a web of relations, with the leadership, technology, materials, people and virtuals interacting with each other and becoming the campaign. These aspects came together in specific ways and the cracks in the planned performance of campaign were continuous, if not ever fatal.

Outside of the election campaign, the image presented of the party by the Labour website is that individual members constitute the primary unit and power and influence filters up through various positions. The basic component of the party is the 'branch', which is defined by council ward boundaries. The party's website says that a Constituency Labour Party (CLP) is '[m]ade up of several branches and based on the electoral area for the election of MPs'⁸. This suggests that the construction of the CLP is made by joining branches together, with power diffusing to the CLP. These two organisations, the CLP and the campaign assemblage, are separate but related.

However, people in the local parties do not necessarily become the campaign volunteers or leadership. Rather, just as in the conferences, each campaign is a unique assemblage composed of various elements (posters, headquarters, a candidate, councillors

⁸ Labour. 'How We Work'. <http://www.labour.org.uk/pages/how-we-work>. Accessed 08/06/16.

and council candidates, organisers, other office staff, volunteers, offices, printers, and so on) that are drawn together for the explicit purposes of the election. This theorisation refers to Buchanan's (2015: 385) notion that an 'assemblage is purposeful [...] not simply a happenstance collection of people, materials and actions' which is how he dismisses DeLanda's theory. In all three constituencies in Brighton and Hove, the selection of the parliamentary candidates was through elections by the local members of each constituency. Thus, separate but related. Where does the national leadership stand in this set up?

The local campaign leadership's relationship to the national leadership's campaign can be understood as a franchise relationship. A franchise is defined by Merriam-Webster as 'the right to sell a company's goods or services in a particular area' ('Franchise' 2017). This frequently includes the shared use of branding and the systems necessary to engineer that selling. In terms of the local Labour campaigns, the candidates were endowed with the power to construct a campaign based on the headquarters' guidance, purchasing materials (through Campaign Creator, on which I focus in the next chapter), and websites (via a website called Nation Builder) which, through modern Internet infrastructure and software, enabled the campaign to be localised while still utilising national branding. There were two books (a long- and short-campaign book) that presented the intended plan of the campaign. All these components were intended to come together with other tactics (such as financial incentives through competitions) to create the image of a cohesively-coded party campaign assemblage, at once local and national. The 'masterplan' that brings these elements together can be understood as that computer program abstract machine, turning the Labour 'machine' from one focused on parliament and local politics, to one focused on the various iterations of the campaign. The local campaign would be a localised variation of the national campaign, with the national leadership enabling this localisation. The national

leadership's role in the local campaign was focused around branding, creating incentives, and trying to spread its desired code. The national campaign was the focus of much of the national media coverage, which could help or hinder this message. This branding and language was a desire to code and thus 'stabilis[e] the identity of the assemblage' (DeLanda 2006: 15). The local campaign leadership, by contrast, was attempting to code the national campaign discourse as local, through its door-step campaign, both through the embodiment of it and the localisation of the message and material. At the same time, it was also attempting some measure of deterritorialisation from the national campaign in order try and code the local as the most important factor to itself.

The local campaign may have received a method and a plan from the national leadership, but the franchise system means that the local leadership also understood that it had some independence. After being selected, the MP candidate constructed their own team and found their own source of finance. This means that lack of finance influenced the becoming of the assemblage, as in some cases, many roles were taken by 'volunteers' (e.g.: local members with time) – and, indeed, some more senior roles, such as advisors, were taken by volunteers who happened to be close to the candidate or were influential and senior in the CLP. Accessing sources of funding was also crucial to being able to follow the guidance of national leadership for a local campaign. For one candidate in Brighton and Hove in 2010 "there was very little money around, and we didn't have organisers, so it's purely down to *you* in whatever time you can spare outside your work to run the campaign. Which I thought was a pretty unprofessional way to hang on to marginal seats."⁹ By

⁹ Interview 6

contrast, in 2015 the national leadership took a more engaged approach to their 105 target seats, emphasising organisers and ‘conversations’, and creating ways in which the local campaign could access money using merit-based mechanisms to incentivise behaviour, including competitions focusing on door knocking and the amount of material given out. We might read these incentives as reinforcing the power relation between the two leadership components, echoing Foucault’s ‘sense that there must be something else, apart from repression, which leads people to conform’ (Mills 2003: 36). In this case, the Labour leadership ran competitions to fill goals, so as to unlock funds.

In target seats, one of the components granted agency by all three candidates was that of ‘organiser.’ The role of organiser, according to a 2016 Labour job advertisement, is ‘to enable and empower members and supporters to organise and campaign in their local community and win elections;’¹⁰ alternatively described as ‘part management consultant, part social worker, fixing problems and soothing activists’ egos’ by *The Economist* (2014, n.a.). The organisers were there to marshal the assemblage, guiding it through the campaign abstract machine (the distinctive plan) towards the general election count (its purpose). Their agency was granted by the approval of both the candidate, the National Executive Committee (the central governing body of the party), as well as tacitly through the behaviour of the volunteers and others involved in the campaign. Although some Labour campaigns had organisers in 2010, for 2015 the national leadership placed an emphasis on the organisers. It sometimes appeared as though the organisers felt that they themselves were key to winning an election, especially in the case of two who repeated, whenever

¹⁰ Labour Party Job Description: ‘Trainee Organiser’. http://www.labour.org.uk/page/-/JD_Local_Organiser.doc. Accessed 01/09/2017

asked, that despite losing the 2010 general election, Labour actually did better where they *had* had organisers. All three constituencies in Brighton and Hove employed at least one organiser each, alongside more free-range organisers who would also flit between the three seats, going where it was felt they were needed. Yet, while the hierarchy may have been conceived as linear and top down, the experience on the ground was somewhat different. While the coding of the hierarchy involves ‘establishing the sacred origins of authority’ (DeLanda 2006: 15), the territorialisation of that role requires an affective experience, laying waste to images of linear hierarchy. Thus, alongside their role in the campaigns, the organisers seemed to have a network and a hierarchy to themselves, connecting and coordinating with the campaigns and the leadership, making them potentially appear rhizomatic as they connected into any assemblage at any time. While there were some ‘set’ positions, the performance of the hierarchy emerged more through fluid relations within the organisation than through the nominal positions the individuals found themselves in. They were all working through the abstract machine: that is what defined their role within the assemblage.

THE ORGANISER AND THE ABSTRACT MACHINE

The duties of an organiser were defined by the election strategy, as well as the local parliamentary candidate’s needs and wants. Each constituency received a general election handbook at the 2014 conference (and could buy more, or download it free online). The handbook describes itself as a ‘strategy for key seats [... but] a strategy which can be implemented in every constituency across the country, regardless of their circumstances.’ Is this what Buchanan (2015: 385) means by an abstract machine being the ‘deliberate

realisation of a distinctive plan'? The handbook specifies three 'types' of voters to target (suggesting that the campaign was something outside society, rather than being part of it):

1. 'Labour promises' – people who have 'promised' to vote Labour.
2. 'Switches – people who voted for someone else at the last election or were too young [...] and are now thinking about switching their support to Labour.'
3. 'Labour retention group – people who have been Labour in the past, but may not vote at this election or may vote for another party.'

The intent behind these codes was to establish how to try to territorialise them: 'in order to communicate with each voter it is important to understand and identify which group they belong to in order that we can tailor our communications. We develop this understanding as we speak to individual voters and ask them Voter ID questions.'¹¹ It was believed that the responses should be coded so that those people could be affected through varied and occasionally personalised campaign material and thus territorialised into the wider Labour voting assemblage.

If this campaign's desired relationship with voters seems clear cut, it did not start out so. There was some confusion in determining the line of flight (the direction of becoming) the local assemblage was to take. First, since this was the first set-term parliament, many political actors had been focusing on the election for a while. One who was selected in 2013 told me they set about working on it immediately, but with a different focus. Around this time, the national leadership had employed Arnie Graf, an American

¹¹ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p.8. 'Voter ID' is short for Voter Identification.

community organiser who trained Barack Obama. In a promotional video for Labour, Graf said that the aim was to reconstruct the party to have “the strength of a machine with the soul of a movement.”¹² The implication was that Labour could be a caring, mass-movement that works efficiently with the community. Scott and Wills (2017: 125) explain that Graf was employed to ‘focus on rethinking the culture and practice of the party’ towards Community Organisation. This was parallel, but not connected, to a limited community organising experiments in ‘Cardiff, Manchester, Southampton and Walthamstow’ (Scott and Wills 2017: 126) during this parliament, by the team behind David Miliband’s 2010 leadership campaign (these projects were finished in 2015). On the surface, this would seem a desire to reorganise the party so as to work *with* society, in other words community organising as an election strategy as in Scott and Willis (2017: 126) finding that ‘some people highlighted the complimentary [nature] between supporting local campaigns and winning elections.’ This approach understands the Labour line of flight and assemblage differently from a closed, top-down one, in that community organising might have a territorialising affect by working *with* society by performing Labour as an open-whole.

However, the national leadership quickly changed tack, and without discussion:

“At the start of the campaign [...] It was Arnie Graf, and it was all about community organising, at some point - and I can’t put my finger on when - it switched to pure voter [identification] and there was no conversation about that. What happened to community organising? Did we decide it was a bad thing? Did we decide it wasn’t working, we didn’t have time, there was no conversation about what happened.”¹³

¹² ‘When we work together, we can win’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71WyC1Tz1ok>. Published 29/11/2013. Accessed 20/05/2016.

¹³ Interview 6

This change caused tension and confusion. It meant that some people found that they were not fulfilling the roles they were employed to undertake. In one constituency, they engaged someone to community organise, not to manage canvassing sessions, but that is what they ended up doing nonetheless:

“**** was going to be a community organiser, and he ended up kind of managing [...] canvassing sessions. Yeah, it just didn’t happen. We started off running [community organizing], although [...] up at HQ, no one seemed very interested in that side, and then it just became- the volume of voter ID required was so high, you didn’t have time to do anything else.”¹⁴

I argue that the difference between community organising and organising voter identification sessions reveals a very particular attitude towards society from the party: in the former, the party is open, trying to work with society; in the latter, it is closed, trying to gather information about that society so to target different individuals within it. In other words, in one the party can be part of society; the other is market research and separate from society, it is of the State and ‘sends out local representatives’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 426). In the event, the confusion of what the organiser was supposed to do did not last long.

By the launch of the ‘long campaign’ by Miliband in early 2015, through an emphasis on Contact Creator, it was clear that a modern technological bureaucracy would direct the door-stepping assemblage. Contact Creator is a website-based database system that collates the information on the Voter Register list (name and address) with information Labour garnered through canvassing. According to the software’s introductory literature: ‘Contact Creator is the most advanced political campaign database available to any political

¹⁴ Interview 6

party in the UK and holds details of electors in every ward and constituency in the country.¹⁵ It formats this information into the Mosaic¹⁶ codes that group different socio-economic classes, so that the campaign can then target them with differently targeted information. In relation to the door-steppers, the organisers role was to put together door-knocking sessions to gather this information.

CONTACT CREATOR

Assemblage alerts us to the role of the more-than-human, and in the pursuit of data-gathering for the campaign, a digital-human bureaucracy territorialised the running of the campaigns. As such, Contact Creator was the centrepiece of the day-to-day activities of the campaign, almost turning the organisers into half-people/half-spreadsheet cyborgs. This is not just an issue of inanimate materials (such as notepads with questions on, campaign materials, and so on, that I shall discuss in the next chapter) having agency, but digital materials having agency. Contact Creator is online, accessed through a browser: it linked together the data acquired locally, and was accessible to both the local and national leaderships. To analyse this relationship, Postman's argument that such an arrangement is a 'technopoly' is revealing:

It is made up of procedures and rules designed to standardise behaviour. We may call any such system of procedures and rules a technique [...] In a Technopoly, we tend to believe that only through the autonomy of techniques (and machinery) can we achieve our goals [...] [However] The argument [...] is not with technique. The

¹⁵ Labour. n.a. *Contact Creator: The Essentials*. p. 8

¹⁶ 'Mosaic is Experian's [a market research company] system of demographic classification that is widely used in the private and public sectors, as well as the other major political parties. Mosaic assigns electors into one of 15 groups, and one of 67 types.' Labour. n.a. *Contact Creator: The Essentials*. p. 27

argument is with the triumph of technique, with techniques that become sanctified and rule out the possibilities of others. (Postman 1993: 141-2)

Labour's general election strategy guide said that 'Contact Creator allows you to ensure that once you've got your road groups¹⁷ into the system, you can quickly generate maps to accompany your leaflet delivery or Voter ID work, reducing the amount of time you spend with a copy of a local map, a photocopier, and a pile of highlighter pens!' This corresponds to Postman's (1993: 85) definition of states, thus, idealistically, 'a bureaucracy is simply a coordinated series of techniques for reducing the amount of information that requires processing.' By centring a bureaucratic franchise-scheme, the leadership seemed to hope the means (an efficient bureaucracy) would be a major factor in creating its desired ends (electoral victory).

The general election handbook's description of the campaign suggests a perspective that through the process of weeding out as to who is and is not territorializable: gaining those 'up for grabs' (as the handbook put it) will be enough to claim victory as long as they can be coaxed to turn up, as '[o]nce we understand and identify which group a voter belongs to, we need to persuade them to turn-out and vote for Labour at the 2015 general election.'¹⁸ This implies that the campaign was not so much about convincing people to vote for Labour's argument, but that it sought to make those already convinced, turn out. Thus, they must be affected to turn out, rather than be convinced to vote for Labour in the first place. This is further suggested by interpretations of figures that Labour lost five million

¹⁷ 'Road groups' are road that have been selected together that the organiser feels 'door-stepable' that can be then printed out and canvassed in a session. The number of roads selected changes depends on the terrain and the type of buildings.

¹⁸ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 8

voters between 1997 and 2010, and it is the 1997 vote to which they continue to aspire (Kellner 2012).

Thus, for volunteers this translates as gathering information. It was to be followed by the door-step effort of taking those targeted 'on a path of communications between now and polling day [...] consist[ing] of a series of communications which set out Labour's message in relevant and resonant ways.'¹⁹ The methods included

- 'personal conversations with the Labour candidate and other campaigners'
- 'house meetings'
- 'Direct mail letters'
- 'Leaflets and newsletters'
- 'Digital communications.'

Rye (2014: 126) has suggested that the growth of bureaucratic power in a political party is noticeable as it comes to 'focus on the tendency of organisations to centralise and restrict the freedom of political actors within it'. However, this would be to accept the 'primacy of hierarchical structures' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 17), and instead, I argue that the extent of centralisation depends on the components that comprise that bureaucratic assemblage: through Labour's franchise-system and the utilisation of technology, Labour's bureaucracy at once made it central and not, distributing agency to the local through its guidelines and funds. And, as we shall see, at the same time the national campaign distributed a notion of agency to the individual door-stepper.

Discipline is a problem for any hierarchical organisation. This is perhaps because it requires training and information to accurately follow tasks and volunteers did not have much. Foucault's notion that power is negotiated (Mills 2003: 36) requires that those

¹⁹ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 8

performing the tasks understand what is required of them and how to achieve those aims. However, it is not the desire of the supposed top of the bureaucracy alone that we must consider, but its relationship with people and the technology. In other words, while the technology supposedly enabled the campaign assemblage, the actual performance depended on the volunteers of the local campaign assemblage to implement it effectively and accurately. I argue that this is evidence of a somewhat Statist utopian hope in this technology by the national leadership, evident in the abandonment of Graf's community organising in favour of data gathering.

Further I argue that the Labour bureaucratic assemblage resembles what Postman (1993: 94) calls a 'technopoly', where 'we are surrounded by the wondrous effects of machines and are encouraged to ignore the ideas behind them [...] we become blind to the ideological meaning of our technologies'. In this, as the mass of data increases, an 'angelic shift' happens, 'whereby humans transfer responsibility for an outcome from themselves to a more abstract agent [...] we relinquish control' (Postman 1993: 114) to the computer. As such, technology defined the Labour campaign and became a focus of agency in and of itself, a seeming belief that organisers and technology would be a very significant factor in delivering an electoral victory. Some of those in a local Labour constituency certainly thought that this modern technology was something of a golden egg:

What a lot of people who advocated us having Contact Creator didn't actually realise - oh, it comes with all this stuff, it does this and it does that. And I'm like, 'it doesn't come with this, *you* have to put input, and data-rep that, and go through this process to do it'; 'no, no, no it comes with this' - oh yes? It's in a magic who-voted-Labour-bit, *woooo*: because it's a secret ballot, remember?²⁰

²⁰ Interview 7

While the voter-register was uploaded to it automatically, it was up to Labour campaigns to match the names with their voting ID work. It was a constant task to keep the database up to date and accurate, potentially diverting the volunteers on the door-step campaign from doing anything more than asking four questions (which we will review in the next section).

There seemed to be little illusion among many I interviewed that Contact Creator was a very good piece of programming. One interviewee commented that it “obviously wasn’t too expensive.”²¹ Another expressed frustration with its relative simplicity in terms of modern programming:

I find it possibly one of the most contentious pieces of software I’ve ever dealt with [...] It’s over complicated, it doesn’t make sense, the - y’know you have to write your little codes? The codes don’t make any fucking sense. The data that it returns is obviously unreliable at best because it only relies on what you told it. It’s not this intelligent system that the Labour party is saying it is, it is completely reliant on what someone on what the door has said to you, and then what your inputter manages to interpret from your scrawls - because the claims make no sense. Even just selecting what you want to print as a set of questions, it’s immensely difficult - there’s no real customisation to it, at all [...] when you’re looking at the sort of information that Hove and Brighton have, obviously, they’ve used for years and years and years, they’ve got years and years of data, and even then, I find that it’s clumsy data. It’s not feeding back any *real* information to the activists about - if someone’s been there in the last few months, you should have a section where you can say ‘X has raised such and such a concern via the council’, but again, that takes man-power from your councillors to raise that, to put that in, and it just seems so infernally arduous to work. I mean, I actually had to entirely shut down my PC - to get it to work, I had to shut down my PC, reset it on an almost empty boot mode so nothing booted, to actually get it to work. And then you’ve got the uploading of the marked registers - and I’m thinking ‘this should be a process of you getting an XLS file, you upload it, it matches your go-to number to the mark and it marks.’ In my opinion it should do that, quite easily. You have to send it into Contact Creator support to do it, even then it takes days-and-days-and-days-and-days.²²

²¹ Interview 9

²² Interview 7

I argue that this highlights the importance of the relationship between the component parts in the assemblage. Contact Creator is only as useful as the information put into it, despite some believing it, wrongly, to be more powerful than that. In other words, software is usable and potentially powerful, but only in relation to the assemblage in question, not in and of itself. Despite the agency invested in it, it was a singular component of the assemblage (albeit one gifted with much agency). Designed by human hands, Contact Creator was an imperfect piece of software and not a 'magic bullet' as some members hoped. The information put into it was dependent upon other components: on the 'scrawls' of the door-stepper in potentially adverse weather conditions (one told me of how a whole day's work was ruined because he had to fill in the board in the rain, rendering it illegible), on the handwriting and on the asking of the right questions in the first place.

Moreover, the information that was in the system prior to this campaign was also problematic. For instance, the organisers never checked how envelopes and other postal-material were addressed. At least one envelope I saw was addressed to someone in a building I am familiar with, but did not specify which flat in a block it was for. Instead, it was addressed to 'Flat 1-12', as is other junk mail to that building. Envelopes addressed like this are familiar to this building, as it has a peculiarity in auto-fill forms (where you enter your postcode but it does not allow editing of the result) where specification of the flat is not provided. Thus, it is a telling sign of junk mail in contrast to personal mail (and even bills). Some hand addressed envelopes would awkwardly copy these vague address, too. These are small but telling signs to the recipient of the material that they are not personal, even if they are addressed as such. This perhaps complicates the DeLanda (2006) notion of assemblages becoming due to their relations, rather than their interiority as it is suggesting

some interiority matters. However, the information within Contact Creator was the result of its place within another, earlier assemblage.

Some of the voter ID already in the system was also wrong. While one interviewee hailed the history of canvassing in Brighton and Hove due to its winnable marginal constituency status, little of the historical data on the Voter ID sheets seemed to match up with what we found on the door-step. It was not simply the case that people might have moved (the name and address were automatically updated by the Voter Register list), but that the information that Labour had gathered was simply wrong. Several times a volunteer (including myself) was expecting to knock on the door of a 'safe Labour family', only to be turned away by lifelong Tory voters.

I thus argue that this agency granted to Contact Creator by the various local leaderships ignored the issues and biases inherent within the technology used. Moreover, as I have said, I did not find the data-gathered be fool-proof. Modern communication technology now determines how many such campaigns are run, when in fact they are still subject to individual and multifarious human interpretations of instructions we might call 'lines of flight' (Colebrook 2002: 57). What is more, technological tools are also created by humans.

A bureaucracy is dependent on those within the assemblage to enact it in the intended way. And although a bureaucracy can shape behaviour, as I will argue in the next section, there are still elements of individual understanding and prior socialisation, as well as the socialising-practices that fall outside of the bureaucracy and hierarchies that can affect how the assemblage becomes. As I argued in Chapter 2, people exist outside formed social structures that have their own 'self-regulating order' (Marshall 2008: 12). It is to the role of door-steppers through the 'technopoly' of this technology that I now turn.

Having explored how the campaign assemblages emerged, I shall now examine some ‘cuts’ into the implementation of those campaigns through the experience of the door-steppers. This section builds on my argument that the abstract machine does not alone define how the assemblage becomes. While the hierarchy and roles of people, specifically leaders, organisers, and volunteers might have eventually become clear through the implementation of the technology, the role of door-stepper was never made completely clear to many of the volunteers doing the job. At the official start of the ‘long campaign’ in January 2015, Miliband asked volunteers to have four million conversations on the door-step. It is worth quoting at length:

We will win this election, not by buying up thousands of poster sites, but by having millions of conversations. I am going to be leading those conversations in village halls, community centres, workplaces right across the country, starting this very week and every week from now until the election. I want you to be doing the same. This year we will be making our case, explaining our vision, house by house, street by street, town by town. Our campaign is setting the goal of holding four million conversations with people in just four months about how we change our country. That is almost twice the number we’ve ever done before. It is more than any British political party has ever done before. And in every single one of those conversations, we will remind people of what is at stake, not speaking over people’s heads with expensive poster campaigns, but talking directly with them on their door-step.’ (LabourList 2015a)

The final figure was estimated to be five million conversations conducted (LabourList 2015b). The handbook states that ‘conversations’ were a key tool in creating a Labour victory.²³ The centrepiece of the campaign strategy, then, was the ‘army’ of Labour

²³ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 8

volunteers: these people were ‘coded’ as Labour, embodying the party at the door-step as the assemblage went *into* communities, and (if we are to take Miliband’s words at face value), territorialising the electorate in an affective exchange hopefully resulting with their vote. However, I question the coding of a ‘conversation’ in this context, since various understandings influenced the becoming of the campaign. Partly derived from the needs of Contact Creator, our instructions for door-stepping were that Voter ID was to ask four questions. This task was described as the ‘single most important tool for identifying the target voters who will decide the general election’²⁴:

1. ‘If there was an election tomorrow which party would you vote for?’
2. Which party did you vote for in the last general election?
3. Would you prefer a Labour or Conservative government? (Yes/No)
4. Who will you vote for locally?’

These questions are designed to gather specific forms of information (codes) for the data entry, but they are closed questions from which it is difficult to start a conversation (understood as an exchange of information). Data gathering was our intended function according to the abstract machine, but it could not define the manner in which we would acquire that information or its accuracy.

ON THE DOOR-STEP

Following the script was important to the organisers. No matter the experience of the volunteers, at the beginning of every Voter ID session an organiser would start with a speech, following the handbook’s recommendation to ‘[m]ake sure all your Voter ID

²⁴ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 15

sessions start with a briefing and that all your team know what they are doing, who we are talking to and the aims of the session. Be clear with your canvassers about the importance of asking question 2 and identifying target voters. And of course, don't forget to thank them for volunteering.²⁵ So closely did some organisers follow the handbook's recommendation for the briefing that they were quietly teased and derided for it, sometimes by members of staff or more 'senior' volunteers. The volunteers were then split into door-stepping groups and sent out to knock on doors and deliver leaflets with one person 'running the board'²⁶. In door-stepping, we were performing and coding ourselves as Labour – we were going *to* a place to gather information about it.

Learning how to perform Labour took a little training, and perhaps a few door-stepping sessions. This was a process of trying to induce coding in a volunteer into the ways the Labour assemblage functioned, thus producing greater heterogeneity in Labour's components. When someone first joined, they were instructed to accompany a more experienced volunteer. This meant learning how to introduce themselves and how to ask the questions. Learning to be a Labour door-stepper was not only a development of a skill set, but the performance also asked for a (temporary) separation from those who answered the door since we were going *to* them. We were not of them, and we were to be coded as Labour to them. This, of course, was not completely true. At least one council candidate was

²⁵ *Labour. 2014. Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 15. The importance of question 2 is that if the voter answered question 1 as 'don't know', then the second would reveal how they have voted, and thus how they might be targeted. This was a problem if they could not vote at the last election as there would be nothing to put in the box.

²⁶ 'Running the board' meant that a person would do the paper data-entry then and there and direct the door-stepping by telling individuals who the names they were to ask questions about.

canvassing the area where he grew up and most volunteers came from the constituency in which they volunteered. Yet, when we knocked on the doors of a stranger, we did not emphasise our being *of* that space: we could have been from anywhere. For example, a council candidate was performing a different subjectivity when he returned to his area: his subjectivity was becoming 'political' rather than 'social' due to the reason of his return. For my part, I tended to simply state that I was "calling on behalf of Labour." And yet, my experience of going into a space meant that I knocked on the door of friends, parents of friends and canvassed a few roads away from other friends. When my friends saw that I was canvassing, it was accepted that I could step 'outside' Labour, and have a different style of conversation with them.

The embodiment and performance of Labour thus temporarily removed us from society. There is a symbolism in the centring of the Labour office that we would always start from and finish at. We were sent out and would return: we were Labour going into a space. At the end of the day, we could remove our stickers and decode ourselves, becoming anonymous, and perhaps once again 'of' a space. These door-stepping experiences were intensive and crucial to territorialising the canvasser, establishing the idea that they were Labour during that session: as Colebrook (2002: 74) puts it, '[i]t is from experience that subjects are formed'. By being coded and performing as Labour while campaigning, the various leaderships desired that our relationship with that society was limited to the performance of a data gathering machine. Or at least, that seemed to be the aim of the abstract machine. Our experience went some way to territorialising ourselves as Labour to each other, helping to establish a social cohesion between different volunteers. This worked alongside the insistence of the organisers, who put an emphasis on volunteers asking only the four questions and in a quick time so as to aim for high-rates of information. Despite

this, we could not but remain *of* that space. Even when elected, the MP candidate was not totally *out* of society, as I have encountered him on several occasions, walking around. And, this removal from space is how we acted, for the most part. Once I was in the pub with my friends (who were not involved in Labour), my experience with them meant that I was coded as a PhD student studying the campaign and was never coded as Labour.

This is because whatever training we had (and it was very little), it could not reduce us to question-asking machines. We became in relation with one another and practices we had learnt outside the campaign, not just *in* relation to it. The experience of a campaign is more rhizomatic than that since language is a rhizome: ‘There is no ideal speaker-listener, any-more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community. Language is, in Weinreich’s words, “an essentially heterogeneous reality”’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 6). And it was language that was at the centre of the door-step performance of this campaign. As such, for some it was not always as straightforward as repeating the script, despite being asked to do so at the beginning of every session. Any volunteer might ask their own interpretation of the questions, asking instead whether ‘Can Labour count on your support?’, or ‘I trust you won’t be voting for the Tories?’ We might use the concept of ‘the virtual’ here, by which I mean the imagined idea that an individual may have of a relation, which then influences how they conduct themselves when faced with it (see Dittmer 2014a): the ‘virtual’ changes how the individual acts within the assemblage in relation to having a ‘conversation.’

The word ‘conversation’ installed a certain agency in the mind of some volunteers. It meant that we were affective agents who could elicit an election win through our conversations. Whether the campaign leadership understood us as affective agents is immaterial for those who understood themselves as such. While we were briefed on where we would be going and were given a paper script (and how to ask the four questions), we

were never told *not* to have more free-wheeling conversations (until, perhaps, they went on too long). One interviewee looked upon the questions as an opening gambit, they were talking pieces, insisting that “we’re not robots, and we *really* didn’t go to every door and ask those four questions in a row [laughs] [...] as you gathered your confidence and you toned your approach and you learned [...] you might not need those prompts so much.”²⁷

However, another saw the door-step questions as limiting and did not feel very appreciated as an autonomous human being by the campaign strategy: “I think a lot of problem is that [...] it’s a machine masquerading as a movement, I suppose. Because I would be surprised if there was another political party with as much presence on the streets, or as many campaigners *as* the Labour party [...] It’s a very strange way [to have a conversation].”²⁸ Yet another interviewee offered their take on some of the issues that arose:

I do sort of cringe when I hear the other people ask questions, because I think with the way you ask them as well - it’s when people say things like ‘can we count on your support?’ Or ‘we have you down as you’re going to vote Labour?’ is not the right way to go about it [laughs]. Those questions, I would say, ‘having thought about how you might vote in May, or whatever’, that’s how I used to phrase it, so it’s an open question rather than, as you’re saying, a closed yes or no question, where you’re not going to get the information that you want.²⁹

These anecdotes show that the campaign hierarchy could not impose a set structure on the acquisition of data, and raises the question over the quality of data as well as highlighting a confusion over what was meant by a ‘conversation’. This suggests that the resulting campaign assemblage was ‘not logically necessary but only contingently obligatory: a historical result of their close coevolution’ (DeLanda 2006: 12). Thus, while it may have been

²⁷ Interview 1

²⁸ Interview 2

²⁹ Interview 9

put together as Buchanan's (2015: 285) 'purposeful' arrangement, the potential lines of flight of the assemblage – the expressions of the components – could not be contained. Through the rhetoric of community and conversation, the leadership set up volunteers with a belief that they were to be an affecting part of the campaign and the variation on the questions asked were a result of this confusion. Those who did not stick to the campaign questions had a greater potential to bring back data not sought for, that Contact Creator had no room for. The volunteers and leadership, since each performed the abstract machine as they understood it, was not necessarily the same.

One of the most often repeated tussles of agency within the campaign was when a conversation was opened-up. A long conversation was considered to be anything over five minutes, although it was frequently 'felt' rather than timed. And it was not that the questions always defined how the conversations went, as some people started talking *at* us when they saw our badges: they did not to talk with us, they wanted to be heard. Introducing ourselves *as* Labour while bearing the material codes meant some voters understood us as embodying the party and they took it as an opportunity to talk with, or *at*, us. This was perhaps an iteration of the party/society divide, taking us to be outside society: as she opened the door, one woman asked "what do you want now? You lot only come around when you want something." Eventually, she told me about how the park's loos opposite were always locked and this was causing a few issues.

These long conversations felt compelling and could be quite interesting. I took a literal interpretation of 'conversation' at first. Some people repeated well-trodden lines (such as "why vote? It doesn't change anything!"; "Labour abandoned us"; "you're all the same"; "you chose the wrong brother"), others wanted to talk about specific issues, such as school qualities and places. On my first morning, I was part of a team door-stepping a low-

rise council estate. No one answered the first few doors, until this one man in his 70s opened his. He spelt out his dissatisfaction and disbelief in the system and told me that not many people around the estate would tell me what he was willing to, but they all felt the same way. He was quite angry. He had tried various businesses, but they had all failed. He felt like he was screwed over by the government, taking the stance of ‘a pox on all your houses.’ Long conversations were also considered the most affective measure by many volunteers – after all, how else were we meant to convince people that the Labour Party consisted of caring people? In a moment of idealistic zealotry, I argued with a unionised ambulance driver about to go on strike and thinking of voting for UKIP that if he wanted to see a change he had to get involved, rather than become passive and register what he called “a protest vote.” Another man wanted to have a conversation about the history of the Labour party, questioning whether Labour was a socialist party anymore. I slowly became known for getting into long conversations amongst some volunteers, a trait they celebrated.

Were these conversations social encounters, or coded engagements from one assemblage (the local Labour campaign) with society? For the volunteers (and myself), this door-stepping activity, of conversing with people beyond the four questions could be understood as part of a ‘social assemblage’ where ‘participants have more room to express their conviction and their own personal styles’ (DeLanda 2006: 16). However, from the perspective of the local campaign leadership, they were supposed to be coded as a door-stepping activity in which there, supposedly endowed with ‘more formal and rigid rules’ (DeLanda 2006: 16) This was made clear when the aspiration for a (real) conversation was quelled in me after another long conversation with an undecided voter (he did not even know there was an election happening), during which an organiser interrupted the conversation three times to get me to move on. I was finally told that a short conversation is

fine but a long one is not. In reaction to this organiser other, more senior, volunteers quietly told me that long conversations were good. Indeed, one with whom I became very friendly questioned how we were supposed to convince people to vote Labour if we did not have long conversations – this volunteer saw these door-stepping sessions as ‘social encounters’, then, with affective territorialising potentials. During another session, when an organiser asked me to fetch other people having conversations, I joked that I had become her “enforcer”. She struggled to find the humour in this.

Once I was deemed territorialised enough, I started ‘running boards’. This changed my relationship to the session as I became the *de facto* point of agency for managing the door-stepping assemblage, anointed by the organisers and looked to for guidance by my fellow door-steppers. For instance, the length of sessions was somewhat arbitrary so board-runners decided how long they should last. I wished to present this to the group: after what I felt was a long two hours, I asked whether they wanted to quit for the day or continue to finish the list of properties we had down. They told me they were pleased to do what I felt. These door-stepping assemblages were a mix of social and formal with no neat boundaries. But, the coding of certain roles removed an element of that social, as it seemed as though the board-runner was the door-step group’s voice of authority: to the fellow volunteers, we had been coded part of the Labour hierarchy *by* the local Labour leadership. In turn the board runner gave agency to the material sheets of Voter ID, which defined where we went and who we were looking for.

I learnt how to ‘work the board’ through the examples set by those before me. I felt a responsibility to keep the group together and to keep it moving. This put me in the awkward position of trying to maintain discipline with other volunteers who might enjoy a lengthy conversation as I began to understand the problem of lengthy conversations for

data gathering. I see this as a struggle between a Foucauldian ‘discipline’ of training by the organisers and my desire to disperse the power to the group so the sessions ran as a ‘direct democracy’, with everybody as comfortable with their roles as possible. By this I mean that I was trying to implicitly diffuse power so instead of commanding the door-stepping, I was enabling it. This suggests that the situation one is involved in is not the only thing socialising a subject during their time within it. Instead a subject comes with pre-existing experiences and memories and notions of how to be.

To allow the freedom of having a real conversation in the face of the four questions to be asked whilst keeping in mind the goal for numbers of doors-knocked on, proved problematic. To an organiser, there is a logic to focusing solely on coding the sessions as ‘formal and rigid’ (DeLanda 2006: 16) through the four questions: the canvasser had not necessarily been briefed about the broad spectrum of Labour Party politics (aside from perhaps a particular policy), and there was very little room for notes on both the piece of paper you were recording the information on, and Contact Creator. Second, and perhaps more importantly, was the need to keep the group together and work through as much of the board as possible. If one person became embroiled in a lengthy conversation, how might they know where the group was going? This was particularly relevant in low-rise estates with complex road layouts, or high-rise buildings with limited access, or even on nice days when people were out.

The board runner was coded as an extension of the organiser’s role in the campaign – central but invisible on the door-step. When attention was called towards organisers on the street, there were interesting reactions. One organiser seemed to have a fear of being seen by the voter. She was leaning on a wall of a front garden, tallying up codes, when the owner of the house came to put some bins out. She scuttled like a scared mouse around the

corner, beckoning with her hand for us to follow suit – as if we were not to be seen and could not be seen. It was as if she was embarrassed and that when we were not knocking on doors, we were to be invisible, as if to be volunteers between knocking on doors was somehow shameful. This organiser was also the one who would discipline other volunteers when conversations were deemed to go on too long.

The nightmare for an organiser or a board runner was the enthusiastic out-of-towner one-off volunteer from a non-Labour majority area. While certainly part of the Labour assemblage, they were not necessarily territorialised into the more formal assemblage the organisers desired, thus the lines of flight, the potentials, they had in conversation were unknown and sometimes felt unbounded. These out-of-towners' methods of door-stepping seemed to lack discipline. One boisterous man who would insist on quite lengthy conversations – he would try and convince every person who answered their door to sign up to Labour there and then – always asked if he could “count on their support” to the point that we ‘locals’ felt he was badgering them. The script was nowhere in sight.

I could argue that there was a split being enacted within the party – between the ‘official’ Labour team, and the volunteers. Whilst the cause of Labour was a passionate one for the volunteers, the organisers were obsessed with technique and only paid attention to that. When a group would return to the office at the end of a session, the first question was about how many Labour ‘promises’ one had got. If an organiser went out as a board runner, they would occasionally give targets of the numbers they were aiming for before we finished. The number of houses on each board was ambitious (too many), by design of the organisers. There seemed to be a divide between passion for party and passion for numbers; as though the former was for amateurs and therefore inferior and it was only when one had graduated to the inner sanctum of a fully paid-up Labour party apparatchik

that one could see the value of numbers beyond that of simple passion. This was the difference between the understanding of the deliberate abstract plan for an organiser, and for the volunteer, revealing the different potential relations that organisers and volunteers had to different virtual and actual Labours. In one of the constituency offices, this split undermined the organisation hierarchy, and consequently I was told,

it worries me that less and less people were coming into the office [...] it became quite a macho culture [...] as both the organisers were men and it started to be a lot of men coming to it [...] that put some of the women off coming, unless they could really hold their own. I noticed that in a way that I didn't really notice it in 2010 - that I'd look around and there were no women anywhere around.³⁰

This particular office became somewhat 'gendered': where the roles of organisers became 'male' and macho, defined by competition with one another; while, door-stepping was perhaps 'feminised', as was though trying to have an affective relationship with the voter was the (female) candidate's role. Data was male, affect was female. The door-steppers ended up organising to meet up on street corners rather than at the office, whilst the person in charge of putting data to Contact Creator would prefer to email it.

A 'conversation' was had, then, but perhaps not on terms that either Labour or the door-steppers really expected. Labour was performed on the door-step through this mixture of understandings, with the results that we now turn to.

THE ISSUE OF CODING

After gathering data, it was necessary to code it, and it was not simply the manner of asking questions that presented a different becoming than that imagined via the abstract machine.

³⁰ Interview 6

The 'technique' of the technopoly also had issues most evident through its method of coding voters. These codes required one-size-fits-all answers (in other words: multiple choice categories), and conveying the more detailed feelings and concerns of a voter was a problem. In some cases, as a board runner, it was tempting to try and utilise the codes to relay a message about a voter. For instance, someone might not have decided how to vote, could not vote in the last election and felt more in-tune with the Green party's political stance, but did not want to allow the Tories in (however did not much prefer a Labour government), yet wanted to vote Labour locally. As such, one might code the result as:

1. Labour (question: who would you vote for tomorrow)
2. Green (question: who did you vote for last time)
3. Labour (question: do you prefer a Labour or Tory government)
4. Green (question: who will you vote for locally)

in a forlorn hope that whoever was analysing this material might realise that the voter in question was swinging between Labour and Green. If the data was entered strictly accurately the answers would not encompass how the voter actually felt. Thus, in trying to personalise the material, the data that the local Labour leadership extrapolated might be very different from the resulting codes reported. However, this meant the database would now have inaccurate information but there was no room for complication. There was very little room for any note about policies or issues that these voters were concerned about. The technology was somewhat inflexible and insensitive to the variety and depth of information available at the door-step.

The result would determine how the Labour campaign might contact the potential voter: through a phone call, a leaflet or a piece of direct mail created through Contact Creator's sister technology, Campaign Creator (more on this in the next chapter). Thus, this coding defines those coded as certain members of political milieus, potentially

(de)territorializable in certain ways. The organisers and headquarters constantly emphasised numbers: headquarters ran a league table and competitions for the local campaigns to vie against one another. The bigger the numbers, the easier it was to access funds. Organisers would give door-stepping groups targets, and prizes were occasionally suggested (but were never awarded in my experience). This posits that the organisers felt that it was not the volunteers who were to be the affective force in delivering a victory, but that they were to *deliver* that affective force through data to be utilised and then through materials delivered by them.

The result of these sessions was that it created a map in Contact Creator. It coded areas more or less 'Labour' depending on the results, thus creating a new periphery to the Labour campaign assemblage, revealing its potential openness – those deemed territorializable – while leaving other areas closed. Those spaces coded 'Labour' were the ones we returned to most often, perhaps to reaffirm who those supporters were, or to find out if their neighbours might likewise vote Labour. At moments, it felt like *déjà vu* as both volunteers and those behind the doors could swear they had knocked on this or that door only days before and received/gave answers. We might take the information for one person from one session, and return there looking for their partner a few days later. This happened to me as the board runner did not believe the answer I was given that it was a 'Labour household', instead only putting in data for one person. This was a problem for some volunteers since we tried to avoid feeling like we were badgering people.

Such was the coding of their roles by the national leadership and the agency granted Contact Creator, that it felt as if the organisers struggled to hear the issues and the very human-centric problems, such as the access to places. In one canvassing session, we were sent to a block of flats that that the volunteers knew and where they knew both the

organisers and where the door-stepping team were not welcome as the block's committee had decided that canvassers were not welcome in the building. Volunteers had relayed this back to the organisers who nevertheless continued to send groups to this building because it was marked down on the database as not having been canvassed (there was no way of indicating spaces that could not be accessed). In another constituency, the organisers wilfully ignored elderly Labour volunteers who had canvassed parts of town previously, insisting that they repeat their actions to comply with the new data.

Some of the more experienced door-steppers were annoyed by the organisers' seemingly blind obedience to the technology. This can be conceived as being the difference of expression between the social assemblage that is Labour, and the more formal assemblage that the campaign was supposed to be. This was most noticeable amongst people who thought they had a healthy grasp of the area. There was a certain logic about which roads we canvassed and thus we canvassed some more than others, dependent upon where Contact Creator calculated that the campaign found sympathy. However, this personalisation could be an issue:

I would then maybe sort of say what streets I thought we needed to do, though sometimes ***** would then say 'no, no, no. You can't do these streets. The Contact Creator tells us to do other streets.' And there was an area we still think we didn't do enough in, because Contact Creator kept telling us to go to other streets, and I just felt some areas, we really kind of overdid and probably annoyed people, whereas there were other streets - as I say - where we probably did once in a year.³¹

Kwan (2016: 275) has argued that the answers from the use of big data and algorithms to solve geographical issues 'might be more an artefact of the algorithms used than the data itself.' This preference can also be at the expense of local knowledge. In another case, we

³¹ Interview 8

were instructed to go to places that did not make sense, such as a nursing home for people with dementia. What these examples hint at is both the lack of local knowledge in the campaign, as well as the lack of flexibility used in Contact Creator. Technology and data are not sensitive to such local issues. The programme in conjunction with the organisers thus frustrated some of the canvassers who tried to highlight local geography.

Some volunteers were sceptical of the technique in general:

I'm not certain that asking people what they voted last time, and what they will vote in the coming election, and what they will vote in the town elections, is really going to elicit and find out the truth. I do know for a fact that, I did a final delivery during that couple of weeks to places over here, of what we thought were our supporters, in other words, Labour promises, and I'd go up to the house with the letter to deliver, and they've got a [Conservative] poster - so I know they lied to us. Yeah, so. People lie.³²

This interviewee was reflecting on both how much the campaign could glean from the questions themselves, as well as the quality of the information. He felt as if the information we received was not necessarily honest, that people might tell Labour door-steppers lies to get rid of us, or not to be rude, or even to amuse themselves. This was part of the party/society performance of divide, that the those outside the Labour party were distrustful of Labour, and thus inherently untrustworthy.

Led by the Handbook and technopoly, the organisers tried to guide the door-stepping technique so as to attempt to code the voters, and thus create a political map of the constituency. Through a mixture of numbers, getting volunteers on the door-step, and contact with the candidate, Labour might territorialise these voters enough to code them Labour. However, this could not account for agency and hierarchy being fluid. And while this

³² Interview 10

is all about ‘how’ the local Labour assemblage was becoming through the abstract machine, it does not address why people would turn up for Labour in the first place as volunteers, which is what I turn to now.

‘BEING WITH’

Above is an exploration of the experience of performing the ‘official’ tasks of the local campaign assemblage. What I have not addressed thus far is how the people who came to the assemblage might stay together, thus becoming these assemblages. I argue that one reason why people volunteer for a political party is the concept of ‘being with’, that performing the party and the campaign affected them. This is alongside, or despite, the usual rationalisations of political alignment, such as familial socialisation, an assessment of interests or tactical voting. Having looked at how the assemblage was supposed to function, it seems pertinent to ask: what was going on between the volunteers during the attempt to territorialise and code Brighton and Hove Labour during the 2015 general election campaign?

In door-stepping sessions, we would go out in teams of varying numbers, perhaps four or five (sometimes more, sometimes less), with one person ‘on the board’. The people who made up the campaign and the individual teams changed on a daily basis, although some regular door-steppers had preferences of ‘team mates’. For those who gathered experience and enthusiasm, the selection of volunteers became something like school physical education football squad selection – you were picked to play on that team, some were favourites, but everyone was on a team in the end. While there may have been some individuals who were more-or-less permanent (such as the candidates, organisers, and

some volunteers), most people changed on a daily basis. There were obvious time limitations for some, such as those in work, or with child care issues. However, what I wish to focus on is both *where* people volunteered and why they returned to the campaign. Through this, I shall explore some of the dynamics that influenced the becomings of the Brighton and Hove Labour campaign assemblages.

While most lived in the area they canvassed, they were not necessarily *of* it as different people joined the assemblage from different spaces. One issue that affected which people came to which Labour campaign, was the local political makeup of the city and the various stances of the candidates. The Greens had territorialised the 'left-wing' of Pavilion Ward and this effected the rest of the city. Because of the Green MP Caroline Lucas in Pavilion and her political cross-over with the more left-leaning Labour members, Hove and Kemptown received left-leaning Labour volunteers who did not wish to campaign against her. However, those who came to canvass for Labour did not feel like canvassing for the Green MP (to do so is against membership rules, as well). They were, however, happy to canvass against the Green council of the city. Some were escaping the localised politics where the relationship between the Greens and Labour within Pavilion was a tense one: one woman explained that as a Labour die-hard, she felt lucky to live in Hove as they did not really suffer from the same intra-Left fighting. Something in these volunteers territorialised them into the Labour assemblage – whether that was a family tie, simply a desire to see Brighton and Hove as a red (and Green) city, or something else. The geographic personnel of the door-stepping teams could seem somewhat rhizomatic, as 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 5), then, since people were (de)territorialised by different Labour assemblages for a variety of different reasons.

For those from nearby Tory-majority seats, the national leadership had set up a system to direct volunteers towards useful spaces, seeing little point in canvassing those constituencies. One interviewee explained his process: “when I went to volunteer, [I] went on the main website, and because my constituency was such a strong Tory majority, they twinned with another one. So, mine was [...] a South Downs constituency, so they twinned that with Brighton Pavilion, ‘cos that’s a minority.”³³ This was not necessarily enforced, meaning that members could volunteer wherever they chose. This brought the volunteer into the local political situation and the volunteers were generally attracted to situations which reflected their own political alliances, interests, and understanding of the situation. For instance, Worthing was considered an unwinnable seat, and it was recommended that the Labour members should go to Hove to help there, but instead they spread out across the three Brighton and Hove seats. Thus, that the assemblage that came together to perform a campaign was in continuous flux, and the ‘geography’ of the Labour party was made even more complex by members in non-Labour areas assembling into those spaces where they were accepted.

While this may shed some light on how local political geographies affected the campaign’s becoming, it does not address why people returned time after time to door-stepping or indeed made the effort to go to neighbouring constituencies in the first place. While some of it may have been about being political and feeling useful, it was not this alone. I argue that an important influence that brought the local campaign together was the

³³ Interview 2

shared doing of the campaign. In-between the major activity of door-stepping were the acts of walking and talking. Lee and Ingold (2006) explain:

walking does not, in and of itself, yield an experience of embodiment, nor is it necessarily a technique of participation [...] both embodiment and participation presuppose some kind of attainment [...] To participate is not to walk *into* but to walk *with* - where “with” implies not a face-to-face confrontation, but heading the same way, sharing the same vistas, and perhaps retreating from the same threats behind. (Lee and Ingold 2006: 67).

This ‘walking with’ is crucial to how the assemblage became. It is the shared spaces of becoming that meant we were performing *being Labour* and going *into* spaces both to the door-step and with each other. It was through these performances that we, in Labour, entered into affective relations with one another and socialised *as* Labour, thus becoming Labour. This is how my relationship with Labour developed and how I became territorialised by the campaign. From Lee and Ingold (2006: 77) again: ‘the meaning of the place is constituted by their bodily presence, and although the specific intent or emotional state of the walker may be hidden to a greater or lesser degree, the route is actually made real by the walker’. The meaning of a place was potentially changed for both those behind the door and those knocking on it, however. While through door-stepping, the Labour campaign was attempting to inscribe their presence into these areas, it was during these excursions as small groups into a space that we became an assemblage in and of itself.

The bonding process was mostly mundane. Conversations tended to be focused on the election and the gossip of the local politics of the city. But there were Deleuzian, rhizomatic ‘events’ (Beck and Gleyzon 2017: 329) where these relations were intensified, such as when those who answered the door were very aggressive, helping to ‘change and reconfigure material reality.’

Aggressive experiences were not very commonplace on the campaign trail. I experienced only a few such incidents and heard of only a few more, but they were always warned about as part of the pre-session briefings. New volunteers particularly would be told not to be scared off by them, because they happen but very occasionally. The new volunteers would ask more experienced volunteers about angry responses and more experienced volunteers would readily retell their accounts of such experiences. By highlighting them, whether or not they happened during a session of door-knocking, they always became a point of conversation. There was a sense of curiosity about the potential and the actuality of them.

My first incident of being sworn at became such an event. I knocked on the door of a middle-class house which was opened by a man who looked to be in his late 60s. I introduced myself and said why I was there, then asked him the question about his voting intentions. While his initial 'hello' might have been inquisitive, perhaps friendly, the subsequent vitriol was anything but. It seemed to go on for at least ten minutes, while it was probably closer to four or five (this speaks to an intensive experience of time that these sorts of encounters produce). His onslaught felt scripted and prepared since he was surprisingly eloquent, but still very heartfelt and very angry. Phrases such as "you're all the fucking same" and "why would I fucking vote for you" were rounded up with a blunt "you can all fuck off" as he slammed the door in my face. He said Labour had betrayed him, although his main issue seemed to be that people in the local area had been petitioning about bins for three years, and last month someone from Labour came around asking him to sign a separate petition (further evidence, again, of Labour acting as going into a place, but not being of it). In response, I tried to adopt a poker face, as I thought anything other than a lack of reaction would give him some form of satisfaction, a satisfaction which was

against my immediate interest (as I did not want him to feel he had affected me). Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 415) write that, to be affected, 'feelings become uprooted from the interiority of a "subject", to be projected violently outward [...] love or hate, they are no longer feelings but affects.' However, the line of flight of affect – what it gives rise to – is not necessarily predictable.

In this instance, as he went on, a few other Labour volunteers passed by, giving me a concerned glance. When I came off the door-step, the board runner came to me and asked me if I was okay, subsequently saying that I had done the right thing. Other volunteers gathered around and offered sympathy, empathy, and kind words. The encounter becomes something to talk about, to share, an exceptional event that is marked out from the rest of the day.

It went beyond the immediate group as well. When we returned to the office for lunch, the staff and other volunteers asked how it went and the others brought up the incident, I did not. The candidate came and asked if I was ok, as did some of the staff. Others wanted to know what happened, and more experienced volunteers shared their own experiences. One recounted, humorously, that he was once told to 'do one, mate' (a colloquial expression essentially meaning the same as 'fuck off'). Another offered their opinion of how silly and unfortunate it is to equate one volunteer to the whole party, and yet another referred to the occasional singular ranter as 'they', drawing together antagonistic experiences that are infrequent as though to imply a certain type of person, or a group of people. Someone else tried to figure out who it was, what number on what road, to see if he was known about (they thought he was as he sounded familiar). To these volunteers those singular events came to embody a particular section of the public.

We might identify these responses as both sympathy and empathy, but I believe they had another significance. The event seems to have affected people, and they opened-up: a bodily relaxation with those who go through it the first time, and who then return. Because I had 'shed blood' for the party, I could now be coded *as* Labour within this local Labour assemblage. Whereas before I was just a new volunteer and I was still in the process of being territorialised (I was not sure if I would vote for the Greens or Labour), now I had a mark of experience.

I argue that the reactions made this an event. The reactions that followed made group bonding visible as it marked me as a fellow traveller, and the experience as one shared. While I was never rejected beforehand, I was now one of 'them': I had earned my 'abuse' badge. Others have talked about the affect of laughter (see Dittmer 2013) in bringing groups together and I expand on this. What my story draws out is that it is not just the 'being with', as Lee and Ingold talk about, but also affect in *doing* with, the suffering with. The repetition of door-stepping and the repeated people and their shared experiences *as* Labour performed Labour to itself. On my first trial outing with Labour in the summer of 2014, it was almost as if that this bonding was more important than the campaign activity of door-stepping and delivering leaflets. This, in turn, was instrumental in the maintenance of an assemblage that went *into* spaces, attempting to code people that were already territorialised through campaigning. In this way, the campaign became a repeated 'event' in which people performed Labour.

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates several of my arguments. First, that the local campaign leadership's relationship with the national leadership was that of a 'franchise' (how the franchise style of branding was implemented is considered in the next chapter). Second, the assemblage's hierarchy was not a 'given', but something performed and occasionally undermined by the actions of the volunteers. Third, a technopoly based around Contact Creator was central to the enactment of the abstract machine (again, 'the deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan' (Buchanan 2015: 385). The organisers did not ask questions such as '[w]ho has put the data in, for what purposes, for whose convenience, based on what assumptions' (Postman 1993: 115), but rather used their agency over the door-steppers to garner as many codes as possible. Questioning the national leadership's concept of a 'conversation' proved instrumental in revealing the differences in how both an organiser and a volunteer might understand the performance of the campaign. Fourth, what questions were asked were not always the most reliable representations of what the leadership desired. Fifth, due to the design of Contact Creator, these codes were limiting in the information they could garner. Finally, the shared performance and intensive experience of the local campaign territorialised those people within it, creating a 'being with', as well as suffering with, laughing with, talking with and so on.

Through the structure of the chapter, I have tried to build up a complex picture of the campaign assemblage with some of the experiences of enacting those campaigns. This is in contrast with the idea of a party as coming from outside a cleaved space. I show that the local Labour assemblages emerged specifically for the campaign designed for the 2015 general election. While there was a crossover of materials and bodies with other Labour

assemblages, the local campaign people were different to those at the conferences and leadership campaign. As such, every local campaign was a multifarious assemblage in itself, defined not only by their geographical ties but also by political and social nuances, including that of 'being with' the assemblage.

It was through people's performance of the Labour campaign that they became first territorialised and then coded into the Labour assemblage. In door-stepping, we materially code ourselves Labour to those we knocked on the doors of and were coded to each other as Labour by our actions. I understand this as a playing out of a Deleuzo-Guattarian (2013a) State organisation that goes *into* a space, and the coded individual's attempt to pay heed to that logic (even if, afterwards, some returned to being *of* that space), a performance of the party/society divide, but one revealed as complex. This was an 'open-whole' in that if someone turned up for a door-stepping session, they might be territorialised into the campaign; however, to those on the other side of the door-stepping, the assemblage was somewhat 'closed'. My argument is that the divide is one performed through the logic of the party and the requirements of the abstract machine. In other words, party members are as much part of society as anyone else but when in Labour, they performed a different 'way of being' – they were representing Labour in whatever way they understood that to be. The attitude of the Labour Party's abstract machine, evidenced through its methodology of door-step campaigning, was that Labour could *help* society, but it was not part of it. As such, volunteers were going into these spaces on behalf of Labour: not to be of that space, but to find out its support for Labour.

Part of the logic that formed Labour's campaign was informed by the agency given to Contact Creator. Let me reiterate that I am concerned that there was not a deeper understanding of the internal issues of adhering to the techniques of this 'technopoly' in the

pursuit of victory. An American volunteer who trained some Labour activists in the 2017 general election campaign is reported to have said that “‘what hasn’t been done so much [...] is [...] ‘persuasion canvassing’ [...] specifically targeting undecided voters”. They would encourage canvassers to make a personal connection, to humanise themselves, and use it to draw out key issues affecting the person on the doorstep, “and then you’re not just a button, you’re the person behind the button”” (as quoted by Hancox 2017: n.a.) As such, while technology cannot dictate how it, itself, will be used, the programming and prescribed use of it does present certain methods as being easier than others. The local and national leaderships desired and enacted social encounters that were ‘formal and rigid’ (DeLanda 2016: 16), removing agency from those components (the volunteers) that wished for a looser approach. Postman offers a critical perspective on the use of modern technology:

In automating the operation of political, social and commercial enterprises, computers may or may not have made them more efficient but they have certainly diverted attention from the question whether or not such enterprises are necessary or how they might be improved. A university, a political party, a religious denomination [...] are not improved by automating their operations. They are made more imposing, more technical, perhaps more authoritative, but defects in their assumptions, ideas, and theories will remain untouched. (Postman 1993: 116)

To me, it did not seem as if the leadership of the local campaign questioned the utilisation of technology, especially Postman’s (1993: 115) concerns around ‘defects in their assumptions, ideas, and theories.’ Indeed, I think there is some evidence that there was a reliance on the technique to engineer a victory based on the use of Miliband’s ‘conversation.’ However, technology is limited by its use as well as its design. An assemblage is more than the human aspects, but in this case this components’ performance was dependent on human input, both in its programming and in its wider data input. With this quest for big-data, local knowledge can be put aside or perhaps even lost since at least one of the aims of the campaign seemed to become a machine-like data-gathering process. The

focus was on a sort of hyper-personalisation of those names on the voter register list, but frequently that personalisation was in a sense false, because of the agency given to the limited and limiting database. As I will argue in the next chapter, these techniques presented a desire for an affective practice. While they did not rely on it solely, the national Labour leadership put a significant emphasis on limited codes.

The potential for a component to not become what an abstract machine may desire is revealed in the myriad ways volunteers performed their tasks. Lines of flight are unpredictable. Though the instructions to the door-steppers were fairly simple, the relation people enacting it had, was complex – perhaps a result of their understanding of what ‘conversation’ meant, in other words approaching the door-stepping sessions as an encounter with a social assemblage. Each had their own relationship to it and to the party, creating many virtuals of the campaign. I also demonstrate how p- politics were wound up with these campaigns that focused on P- politics, as evidenced in one constituency where many of the female volunteers stopped going to the office. Thus, any bureaucratic format is subject to its relations with the components as it is a single component in a broad field of relations. In this, my contribution to electoral geography has been the peopling of electoral campaigns, investigating how those within the party relate to one another, as well as those outside, and how this party hierarchy emerges through its performance as well as through the utilisations of and dependence on modern technologies.

While the campaign assemblage I worked with may have been a heterogeneous ‘open-whole’ drawn from different CLPs and enacting a territorialised volunteer force, it is hard to generalise about how the ‘electorate’ responded. While some people were very pleased to see us, others provided quite a different response. Some neighbourhoods were considered of only marginal importance but in those, individual votes were necessary. Paper

council candidates³⁴ were put forward in some wards because the Leadership of the local party did not believe that certain parts of the town were viable, they were just for numbers. Indeed, when Labour visited these neighbourhoods, there was talk of ‘going in’ to a Conservative space, as though invading foreign space. Against some positive feedback, some swore at us, some just ignored us, some just shook their heads. Ultimately the affective desire of the door-step sessions seemed not to be to attract new voters, but to convince those already-decided to come out and to reaffirm the assemblage in the election. The thinking behind the use of the technique seemed to suggest the idea that there were already enough voters: they just needed to be made aware of a general election and to be got them to the ballot box. An affective push, as it were. And, sometimes the point of the session felt as if it was about us, ourselves, as door-steppers, becoming Labour.

The tools of assemblage and affect may tell us much of the general election and parties that electoral and political geography have not yet considered. What I have done in this chapter is to try and apply Buchanan’s (2016: 388, his italics) concern over ‘*what* is [the] structure of authority’ with what he interprets as DeLanda’s approach as to: ‘*how* a particular authority actually changes’. I do not think that either concern is mutually exclusive, as the focus on becoming here has been about *what* the structure of authority was supposed to be, and *how* that was acted out. To only described the *what* of structure of a social assemblage is to cut it too severely from the becoming of it. Rather, I argue that playing one off against the other reveals the desired power structure of those at the top of the hierarchy against the potentials of becoming to those enacting the campaign.

³⁴ Paper candidates are names put on ballot without the belief they could win.

The assemblage approach makes us deal with our bubbles, no matter where we are doing our fieldwork. In this, we are only aware of what we are ourselves exposed to. The American theatre critic Pauline Keal once addressed this by saying “I live in a rather special world. I only know one person who voted for Nixon. Where they are, I don’t know. They’re outside my ken. But sometimes when I’m in a theatre I can feel them” (as quoted by Wolcott 2012: n.a.). As I have explored here, despite any desire to assert a homogeneous experience, the experience is always heterogeneous and I can only reflect on the experience I had and those I interviewed. The campaign team did not really care, on the surface, who asked the questions, just that they were asked. They did not care what the answers were, only that they received them, and could code them.

Finally, my relationship to the party changed not because of the campaign, but because of enacting the method – the being *with* these people: I was territorialised and affected by the experience. However, the people in this social assemblage were not the only beings with agency. While I have so far focused on the experiences of door-stepping and technology, it is the materials with which we were provided that I turn to in the next chapter. These were at the centre of many exchanges, both within the assemblage and on the door-step. Materials played an important part in the becoming of the assemblage and the use of them added further concerns to the relationship that the campaign had with the ‘technique’ which I have explored in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6. THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN CAMPAIGN

“Very rare,” an experienced volunteer said, pointing to something stuck on the inside of a window. It was an A4 orange poster, bearing the names of two Labour council candidates. It was not the only one as there were a few of the same posters on the council estate we were canvassing. These posters had caused a bit of a dispute between the two council candidates and the local campaign leadership. Showing unity through material mattered to the leadership and there was a ‘poster war’ (seeing which party could get the most visible support in windows and front gardens) going on across the city. Through a poster in the window, or a sign in the front garden, this was an attempt to visibly code different households and thus hopefully territorialise neighbours and code whole neighbourhoods.

The organisers had highlighted the importance of posters a few weeks beforehand. They told volunteers to hand out as many as possible (“ask everybody who is a supporter if they want one”) and, where applicable, to ask to replace general posters from the central leadership with local posters that emphasised the local parliamentary candidate. There were prizes suggested by the local leadership for those who handed out the most posters. These prizes were to consist of Labour branded items that included a mug which had a choice of five election promises, number four of which said, ‘Controls on Immigration’. Doubtful jokes had been made about this, as it had been picked up not only by social media but by left-leaning ‘traditional’ media and the local candidate did not support the policy. Uneasy mentions of it were evidence of a self-conscious humour among the campaign team and some of the volunteers.

There was an important difference between these two kinds of local Labour posters. Replacing national posters with parliamentary candidate posters was approved of by both the national and local campaign hierarchy. Through the utilisation of Campaign Creator, local posters could have national branding while also holding the candidate's name, thus coding one with the other. They were also of the 'right' red. The councillor posters, however, were not approved by the leadership or the parliamentary candidate's campaign and they did not have the proper branding, since they were orange and not created through Campaign Creator. They were off-message: the result of a lack of budget and the council candidate's frustration with the local campaign leadership's lack of interest in promoting them, as well as the local campaign emphasis on the MP candidate. Thus, the council candidates printed and handed out their own. What seemed to rankle most with the local campaign leadership was the mixture of the colour of the posters, the lack of official branding, and the fact that the councillors had acted independently. This was a dispute about who had the right to code themselves Labour, and how. In this case, the hierarchy and cohesion of the campaign was being questioned and undermined. In another canvassing session, one of the council candidates responsible for the aforementioned orange posters told me she had never been part of such a centralised campaign – she was frustrated, she felt her freedom was hampered. What these examples highlight is the affect agency materials within the assemblage can have in the relations within the campaign. It also reveals how hierarchy is performed and maintained.

Whereas the previous chapter focused on how the people and the local leadership interacted in becoming the peopled local Labour campaign assemblages, this chapter focuses on the use of modern technologies for the creation of material (both physical and digital) of the campaign, and thus how they related to and effected the becoming of the

assemblage. These materials were components in these assemblages. Fox and Alldred (2015: 402) write that assemblage is part of what they call a 'new materialism', where '[m]atter is not inert, nor simply the background for human activity, but [has agency] with multiple non-human as well as human sources of agency with capacities to affect.' Thus, this chapter's focus stems from the role that material had in the campaign assemblage, arising from my application of assemblage in establishing a methodology. At first, I approached a focus on the material of a campaign with scepticism, but the agency of material in this social assemblage was such that it would be a mistake not to investigate its role. However, '[if] the objectives of a materialist social inquiry are to reveal relations [and] affects [...] in the assemblage, the capacities (and limits to capacities) produced in bodies, collectives and social formations [...] its orientation must be towards what things do, rather than what they "are"' (Fox and Alldred 2015: 406-7). I first look at Campaign Creator, the website database used to design and order the physical material utilised by the local campaign assemblages. The idea seemed to be that the (re)coding of Labour would be handled by the national leadership, while Contact Creator and Campaign Creator would enable the local campaign leadership to personalise and localise this national code. Campaign Creator is, thus, an important technology in trying to give Labour the appearance of a cohesive organisation. By examining the use of Campaign Creator, I argue the agency that materials were given in the wider assemblage was premised more upon coding than language. Second, I consider how the material circulated during the campaign. I do not focus on how affective the campaign material's language was, in and of itself, rather I show how the agency of material was invested in its coding in conjunction with the abundance of that material. Finally, I study the use of digital media around the theme of 'spreadability' (meaning a focus on how and why certain content spreads online – see Lingdren 2015), querying why it failed to penetrate my

social media bubble, and how some in the Labour assemblage utilised the visual language of social media through the 'selfie', and to what end.

The Labour handbook for Direct Mail suggested how these different digital technology components might work together. It defines Campaign Creator as

Labour's online Communication platform [... a]s well as using it to put together leaflets, and send emails and SMS messages we can use it to produce direct mail products. With Campaign Creator we can send data directly from Contact Creator and mail-merge it directly into a variety of professionally designed postcard and letter templates.³⁵

The role of materials within political party assemblages is almost entirely absent from electoral geography, and I seek to seek to redress this balance. Indeed, this chapter evolved out of the last, as when I constructed my methodology I paid only cursory attention to materiality but the agency and role the materials played in this campaign became clear during the fieldwork and analysis. As Acuto and Curtis (2014) have observed,

'assemblage thought [...] moves away from the anthropocentrism that characterize the vast majority of historical and political writing, replacing it with a form of materialism that lays emphasis upon the creative capacities of matter and energy, and the process that instantiate them in their great variety of forms, including those that emerge in social interaction' (Acuto and Curtis 2014: 2)

In this chapter, I have contributed to political and electoral geography by expanding the concept of the party to the material that it produces for its campaign, both physically and digitally.

³⁵ Labour. 2014. *Targeting your campaigns using direct mail*, p. 2-3

CAMPAIGN CREATOR

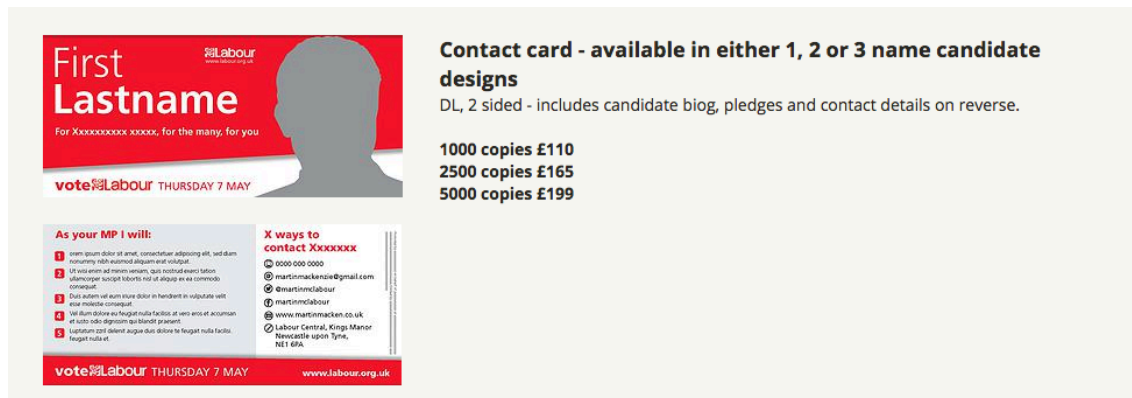


Figure 6.1: A calling card template from the Campaign Creator website

The website Campaign Creator was crucial to the distributing of campaign material far and wide (locally, it was mostly delivered by hand). It was a key tool in trying to popularise and localise the national leadership's desired code with the voter. The general election handbook boasts that the website has 'over 100 templates for all kinds of printed campaign materials, designed by professional designers and incorporating feedback from activists and organisers.'³⁶ Figure 6.1 is an example of the kind of template Campaign Creator allows for customisation of templates that can then be ordered and delivered, or quickly printed on a Risograph³⁷. This technology simultaneously allowed the national branding of the campaign material, and the localisation of it. As Page and Dittmer (2015: 256-257) explain:

[A] flyer begins as a digital file stored on a server paid for by Labour Party Headquarters. As such, it [is] laden with potential: it lacks local geographic markers such as the name of a constituency or a candidate. It can be for anyone, as long as they accept the Labour branding that already codes the file. The template is

³⁶ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 45

³⁷ A Risograph is a high-speed, large-volume printer.

accessed by activists from all over the country, accessible to the broadband infrastructure lacing (much of) the countryside. Via a web portal, the template is further coded with the particulars of the local election, such as the issues identified by the local campaign as potentially meaningful to voters. The flyer-to-be thus mediates between the central and local campaigns, helping to produce a simultaneously central and local multiplicity of Labours all across the country.

Labour material was ‘coded’ to be instantaneously recognizable because of the font, the *tint* of red, the cut-and-frame of a picture. The repetition of style is to create and register an immediate recognition of those codes, perhaps eliciting an affect, a recognition, in the recipient, potentially territorialising their senses: as Colebrook (2002: 40) writes, ‘we are not deluded by propaganda, but our bodies response [...] to these pre-personal “investments.”’ The Direct Mail Handbook gives guidance as to how affective they expect the language on the material to be: ‘the average lifespan of a leaflet between it being picked up from the doormat, read and thrown away is short.’ As such, ‘readers are likely to notice the main headline, photo and branding, but often little else.’³⁸ This suggests that the agency given by the abstract machine in this assemblage to many of these materials was not even about it being read, but rather to make known the presence of Labour in the area and to instil a recognition of code. It was a concurrent material and social expressions of Labour’s attempts to code the area and territorialise the potential voters covered in the previous chapter – on the door-step, through the letterbox, and into the bin. The assemblage did not stop at the body on the doorstep, but onto the doorstep: there are no clear boundaries. Rather, this material was the result of one assemblage, and could become part of another one, affecting the recipient. The Handbook to Direct Mail describes how the more generic

³⁸ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 39

material may be lost around the ‘noise’ of the other material pushed through a letterbox and will ‘probably be picked up and put straight in the bin.’³⁹ Thus, although localised, material was designed with the

assumption that they are not going to be read: the colour red, and the word “Labour” in big letters at the top should at least mean that if the leaflet isn’t read the voter will realise that the Labour Party have taken the time to attempt to communicate with them, if the voter registers the headline of our main story as well, that’s an added bonus.⁴⁰

In this sense, the purpose of material was simply code recognition and this material was used as bulk to spread the illusion of Labour being ‘in’ a place. It was to advance an idea of Labour’s presence in the space.

The second idea behind the material was to affect specific audiences, working on the collection Voter ID. For instance, people who had voted Labour previously were supposed to be targeted with different information from those who had voted Liberal Democrat or Conservative previously. Some of the individualisation and targeting was also an attempt to code Labour as an approachable party, hand-in-hand with the coding of door-stepping as ‘conversation’. ‘Labour is human and here’ was the message: not an abstract, amorphous blob somewhere in Westminster. Thus, the material and peopled expressions of the campaign assemblage were to work together, as two components of a territorialising machine. One envelope that resembled a bill (mostly blank, slightly larger than a letter, with a see-through window for the address with no indication of who it was from), contained a letter from Ed Miliband addressed on a first-name basis (although the address was wrong in

³⁹ Labour. 2014. *Targeting your campaigns using Direct Mail*, p.2

⁴⁰ Labour. 2014. *Targeting your campaigns using Direct Mail*, p.2

this case). The personalisation took other forms, such as some other envelopes being hand-addressed.

Perhaps the most interesting was an endorsement letter which used hand-writing and a personal narrative. It told how the parliamentary candidate had helped the author out of a tight spot and followed with an endorsement. The appearance of a personal letter was only interrupted at the bottom of the page by the legal requirement to have an imprint that it was political party advertising. This technique and others were covered in Sasha Issenberg's *The Victory Lab* (2013). While solely focused on new methods variously used and studied in US campaigns up to and including the 2012 general election, he highlights that the implementers are taking 'a politics distended by television's long reach and restoring it to a human scale', thus arguing that some '[c]ampaigns have started treating voters like people again' (Issenberg 2013: 13). However, Issenberg's findings suggest that these techniques are premised on marginal gains of a few percentage points here and there: they may achieve incidences of getting a few disparate people to vote, but many do not seem to be able to bring about a significant change. The embracing of such techniques seems to suggest that the problem is not the message but the medium. If the medium *was* the message (i.e. personalisation), then that could be crucial in achieving an electoral victory for the user in question, rather than the marginal gains the techniques seem to achieve. The methods used by the Labour leadership fit into Issenberg's (2013: 8) 'category of campaign activity known as "voter contact" [...] the way most voters interact directly with campaigns: the phone calls that interrupt dinner, the knock on the door from a young canvasser, leaflets stuffing the mailbox as election day approaches, personalized text-message blasts'. Really personalised material, such as this letter, stands out, as Issenberg (2013: 2) explains: '[r]esearch suggests that a personalised product will keep an elector's attention for

significantly longer than a blanket leaflet, so the more we personalise our literature, the more chance we have of them absorbing our political messages'. This is why voter ID was potentially so important. Materials, such as the personalised letter mentioned above, were understood by Labour as

'most effective when the endorser hand writes the letter. But if they don't happen to have great hand writing, don't worry! There are handwritten style endorser letter and leaflet templates on Campaign Creator which can work just as well.'⁴¹

I argue that this material was a product of the performance of the closed political party assemblage going *into* an area, while trying to prove that the local Labour party had provided some 'genuine' help to real people in the community. This was an affect-based approach to the territorialisation of voters, a suggestion that Labour were not *of* the community but could help it. This was an organism of State that 'sen[t] out local representatives' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 426). We can see this in the language of the material. The Brighton and Hove Labour party's manifesto was headlined with 'A Council That Works For You,' with the sub-headline, 'Labour's Contract With Brighton and Hove' (Warren 2015: n.a.). By abandoning the Graff-community organisation in favour of Voter ID in 2013 (two years before the election, and before all the candidates had been selected), the national leadership's focus was clearly on gathering information and personalising material. A few months into the campaign, the organisers instructed volunteers to ask a fifth question, that was to be noted down elsewhere (not on the Contact Creator database, as there was no room): "Is there anything that you would like to highlight to Labour?" This was an affect based question to target potential voters with specific literature as well as try and

⁴¹ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, pp. 36-37

use the door-stepper as an affective presence: Labour is interested in what concerns you. But the power structure is also clear: Labour can fix this problem *for* you. It was not premised on the problem being fixed *with* Labour. Although some Labour councils did experiment with community organisation, it was never widespread: it was experimental and local, not a national policy to reorganise the party to be community organisers. The approach of the Labour leadership, locally and nationally, was to imagine Labour as a fixer and not an enabler.

The problem was that of personalising on a large scale. While a solution presented itself in modern technology, personalisation was rather down to a vague targeting based on general voting trend, rather than a one-on-one approach. Moreover, there can be a backlash to this style of personalisation, as one volunteer told me of a friend's experience:

she'd got one of those letters ostensibly from a local resident - which I think *was* from a local resident - but they were kind of mass produced [...] The thing that she didn't like about it [... was] the fact that it had been addressed to her, like, in her name (which is on the electoral register) [...] and address, and it had been hand delivered, so it didn't have like a stamp on it. But [...] it had her name and address, and it was as though it was a letter handwritten by a person, but I think it was copied. People get very funny about that degree of personalisation, I think.⁴²

This was a bodily, affective reaction: something about this use of data made her suspicious and uncomfortable. It demonstrates a sort of familiarity, a human touch, which when it comes from an impersonal body like a political party, can be affectively disturbing.

The limit of real personalisation in favour of coded targeting leads me to argue that in the case of the local and leadership Labour campaign, it is not that, as Issenberg (2013: 13) argues, '[c]ampaigns have started treating voters like people', but that new technologies

⁴² Interview 4

and new techniques have generally increased a style of ‘microtargetting’ which is still not *that* personal. It does not necessitate that those involved in performing the campaigns look any deeper into the relationship between parties, voters and policies. I reiterate what Postman (1993) argued: the issue is not necessarily the technology, but the deference to it. While the technology may have enabled a more detailed reach, it only enabled an illusion of personalisation, while maintaining a blanket approach to the codes of voters. Perhaps I might be able to theorise this as a formal assemblage trying to appear more as a ‘social’ one; that the local Labour leadership sought to territorialise by appearing to be a social hierarchy, rather than a vote-grabbing machine. This illusion was betrayed by the legally necessary tag at the bottom of each piece of campaign material noting who paid for it and on behalf of whom. While the creation of this local-yet-national material was dependent on the digital infrastructure to produce it, to distribute it Labour looked once again to its volunteers.

THE VOLUME OF MATERIAL

Besides asking the four questions to every person who answered the door, we would also deliver a ‘calling card’⁴³, regardless of whether they answered or not, or if they supported us or not (see Figure 6.2), as well as perhaps an event flyer, a poster, or some other piece of campaign literature. Towards the end of the five-week short campaign, it felt as though pushing yet another calling card through a letterbox was almost akin to harassment. Surely,

⁴³ A locally branded flyer with the candidate’s name and picture on one side - sometimes including the area’s council candidates - and some information on the other. See Figure 6.1

they had had one by now? Surely it is just irritating them? Even we were getting annoyed and we visibly and actively supporting Labour. Such bulk was a source of guilt for myself and other like-minded door-steppers. We joked about the number of trees felled to create the material. The figure bandied around at the end of the campaign in Hove, delivered with pride by the local leadership, was that 300,000 pieces of campaign material had been handed out and delivered in a ward with 80,000 people, a testament to the role materials played in this assemblage. (See Figures 6.3 for the local Brighton and Hove materials I collected during the campaign; see Figure 6.4 for the national materials I collected during the campaign.) Buchanan (2015: 385) is wary of constantly placing an emphasis on the role of materials in assemblage, arguing that the concept is ‘not defined by such objects [... they] can function perfectly well without them.’ However, I feel that the materials utilised in the campaign were components with agency that warrant focus. One of the purposes of this assemblage was to distribute this material. The amount distributed resonated with the negative feelings that some voters had expressed to us about the bulk, to the effect that in the last few days before the election some of us stopped putting leaflets through doors. So, when one person stopped our door-stepping group and asked for a poster, there was almost an audible gasp – who actually wanted more of our material?



Figure 6.2: Examples of the calling cards (front and back).

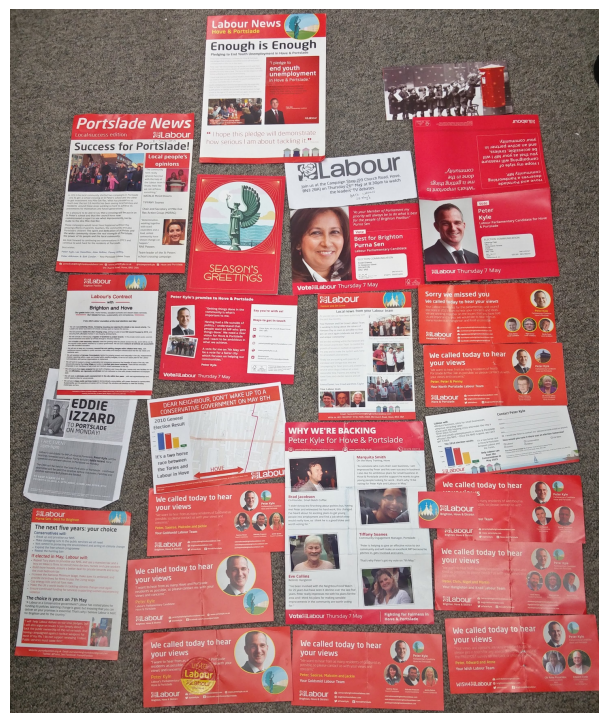


Figure 6.3: A sample of the locally-branded campaign materials distributed by the local campaigns.



Figure 6.4: A sample of the nationally-branded campaign materials distributed by both the national campaign (through mail) and local campaign (by hand).

This deluge of material meant that we left a physical trail, a presence. Our flyers hit the doormats and sometimes our posters would appear in windows. We were showing our route by leaving a bread crumb trail of flyers. The end result was to register a Labour code to residents: Labour had been there, or – through the posters – Labour are here: you are in a Labour area. This spread of material and presence was a literal attempt to code the voters in that spaces. By getting posters in the windows, we were also trying to physically ‘code’ that house, a visible manifestation of that code we had put into Contact Creator. If we had enough in the area, we might be able to code the whole place as Labour.

Some people were upset by the trail of material we left behind. One elderly lady had carved ‘NO’ in capital letters again and again on torn-up flyers and placed them in a plant

pot outside her front door. When I knocked, she pointed them out. I asked her why she did that, which she took as an opportunity to complain about the number of flyers and went into a tirade about her hatred of Labour. During this, she focused on Ed Miliband's teeth and finished with the image that he "was madder than a bag of Polish gits." This level of vehemence and disgust towards the party was unique in my experience, but not the attitude towards the material. Towards the end of the campaign, canvassers had people coming out to ask, beg, and shout at them to stop putting things through their doors. Some actively suggested that they would vote Labour just to stop receiving things. This reaction to the volume leads me to argue that it was not that many individual materials had much affect, but the abundance which became affective. The attempt to spread the visibility of Labour through material means was very important to the campaign, quite apart from the issues and reactions. We were not simply going into somewhere but trying to code the neighbourhood and this was evidently resisted by some.

There did not seem to be much variety in the material we handed out. One interviewee told me that many of the leaflets "were sent out with such imperceptible differences each time that, to someone who wasn't reading them, who (again – I presume were a fair amount of people) would just be like, 'we're getting the same stuff over and over and over and over again.'"⁴⁴ Perhaps this contributed to the discomfort mentioned earlier.

One issue for the local leadership was that the national leadership unveiled the party's manifesto very late in the campaign (three and a half weeks before voting and the local leadership were not informed beforehand of its details), so they had a limited number

⁴⁴ Interview 2

of things they could promote as definite policies. The ability to produce a variety of material about specific policies was dependent on communication with the national campaign assemblage as the manifesto was delivered quite late into the campaign and the local leaderships were unwilling to conjecture on national policies for their own material. This meant that they could not stand on firm ground on issues such as the renationalisation of the train system (which is an ongoing issue in Brighton and Hove, populated with commuters as it is).

The campaign language present in the manifesto, calling cards, flyers, and so on, was launched from main platforms through the leadership speech at the 2014 Manchester conference. Suggesting the theme of the campaign, Miliband (2014: n.a) insisted that we were “better together”. Localisation came through adding the candidate’s names, pictures, and maybe a motif of local symbols, here and there (for instance, the iconic Hove beach huts). However, in the becoming of the assemblage, sometimes, as Page and Dittmer (2015: 258-259) point out, the relations producing the material are not successful in that production. Being pushed through a door, flyers may take on independent lines of flight. For instance, some flyers enter into social media assemblage, perhaps pointing out their flaws (in this case, a flyer reading ‘A record of action in [INSERT NAME]’ – see Figure 6.5) producing a potential hindrance to the campaign’s end goal. In another case in Brighton, some Green activists were caught on CCTV in the foyer of a building, stealing other parties’ flyers (something I also witnessed sometimes within Labour door-stepping groups).

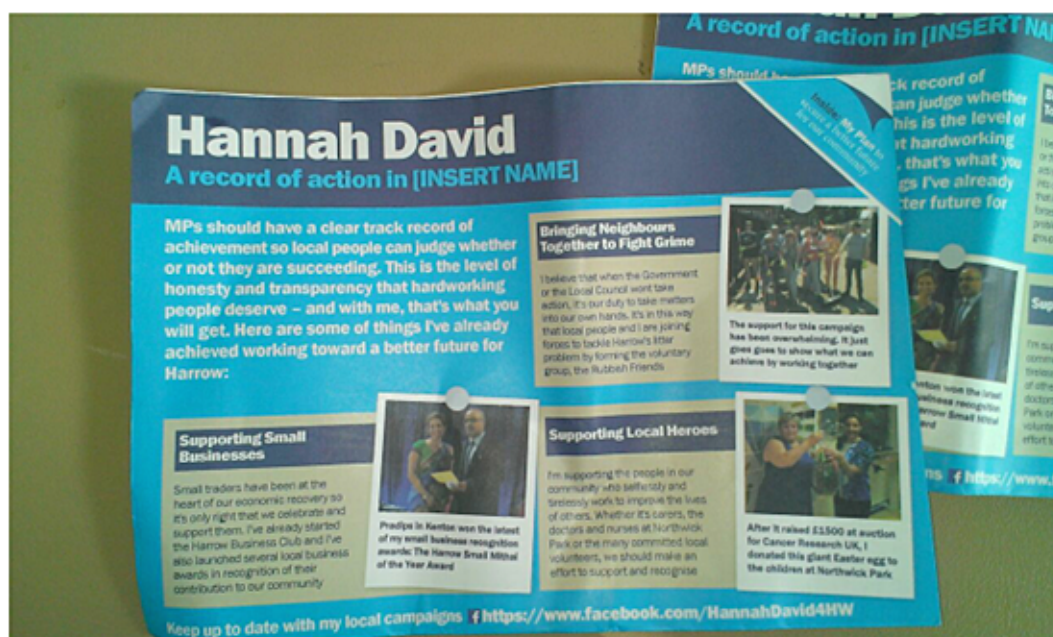


Figure 6.5: Reproducing human errors through technology

Labour's *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook* argues that this materiality played several roles. First, it showed that Labour had been in the area, even if the household was not in. This speaks to the volume of material given out and the role of posters: Labour was trying to leave an impression of being present within that space. Second, if read, the material provided some basic information in the form of headlines and no details. Third, it provided a way to get in contact with Labour – often a personal-looking email address of the MP candidate, suggesting that Labour was peopled and approachable. That it presented a nationalised code was crucial to the performance of Labour, both nationally and locally. I argue that the details of this approach can be read to understand Labour as offering to work on behalf of that space, rather than with those within it. To do this most of the material handed out was designed through a system that allowed this material to maintain a visible code – the same logo, the same red, the same picture cut-outs, the same fonts, and so on. All the things that the orange poster mentioned in the

introduction, did not have. It was advertising the wrong people (there was no mention of the candidate), with no logo, no pictures, on a standard A4 orange sheet of paper. The language and argument never seemed to be the main purpose of the material. Instead it was about making Labour appear present. In the next section, I will look at how this logic of the use of technology and code expanded into the digital material spread by the campaign.

THE DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

Social media provided another approach to territorialising voters by the Labour leadership, locally as well as nationally. The use of social media was not new in political party campaigning (Issenberg 2013). Jalali (2014: 98) argues that both Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns depended on, and were at least partially successful because of, the utilisation of social media. On the back of Obama's first campaign, Harris and Harrigan (2015: 252) have noted that there was 'considerable speculation that the UK general election in May 2010 would be an "Internet election" if lessons could be learned from the U.S.' They conclude that this did not happen, and that it was 'far from being an "Internet election." There was little evidence of the methodical and integral approach to online and offline engagement' (Harris and Harrigan 2015: 277). Jensen and Ansted (2014: 58) noted that neither 'the then prime minister, Gordon Brown, nor Conservative leader David Cameron opened personal Twitter accounts during the campaign, the latter infamously critical of Twitter as a medium that does not permit reflective communication.' However, in 2015, social media was once again on the agenda as Channel 4 News (Bell 2015) wondered whether this may be 'the first "social media" campaign'.

Since the 2010 election, social media had changed and its relationship with society had changed as well. My social media feed mixed big P- and small p- politics quite fluidly, as articles were traded on Facebook that covered both the issues of everyday politics as well as State political issues. This highlighted how they are mixed, and part of one another. This continued growth in the use of social media consequently altered the relationship of these medias to political campaign assemblages. Both Ed Miliband and David Cameron had Twitter accounts, as did the parties, and many of the candidates, councillors, and volunteers. This is not to mention their Facebook accounts, that may be potentially another space of public engagement. The *Win2015* handbook features suggestions of how to use social media to spread Labour's intended code of a personalised, caring party. That modern Internet technology was at the heart of the Labour campaign is already evident in the form of Contact Creator and Campaign Creator.

The party wished to produce social media material that was spreadable. Lingdren (2015: 4) uses the term 'spreadability' (or what is colloquially termed 'going viral') to focus on the qualitative issues concerning social media material: 'about what it means, and what happens, when people make all of these micro-decisions to share or pass along content to exponentially sprawling social networks'. While I agree, and support his broad focus on spreadability, I argue he overemphasises the individual and their 'micro-decisions', since he claims that 'The consumer of content will not only think about what the original producer might have wanted to say, but also about what the person passing it along wants to communicate' (Lingdren 2015: 4). I do not think people think that deeply, or frequently. Instead, it is an affective space where the bubble we witness is created, felt, and performed.

For the Labour campaigns, social media platforms presented another space in which the material and approach of the campaign might be spread in a way that was at once

localised and national. It was the increasing omnipresence of the Internet, the advance of connection speeds and the evolution of Web 2.0 that allowed the campaign to be organised like this. It was the assemblage of software and hardware that allowed for a strategy that could create personalised franchise-branding as well as the stylising of Tweets, Facebook posts, and Instagram pictures through the progress of the physical Internet infrastructure that had been advancing since the mid 1990s, perhaps earlier. By 2015, broadband, social media, and ideas of big data were influencing how British campaigns were becoming.

The campaign handbook featured guides for how to use the popular social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. Like the handwritten letter above, the techniques suggest a desire and an attempt to code Labour as an approachable body, and to assert Labour as actively going into spaces and being approachable. Most obvious was the use of the personal accounts of candidates to deliver daily updates on their progress, links to their speeches, and to advertise photo opportunities. The general election handbook's guide to social media is straightforward and recommends engaging people by asking followers to 'RT (retweet) or asking a question.'⁴⁵ They also recommend tweeting three times a day at 1pm, 5pm and 7pm (designed to coincide with the time when people may check social media), and give an example of a tweet: 'Labour would tackle the cost-of-living crisis & help families – but first, we need your help. Join us.'⁴⁶ (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4 for two variations of this.)

⁴⁵ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 51

⁴⁶ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 54



Figure 6.6 Ed Miliband's tweet



Figure 6.7: A Brighton and Hove candidate's tweet

There was an obvious desire for the digital materials to be affective. The handbook says that '[h]aving a strong, emotive and engaging online campaign is now expected by many voters, and local parties work hard to achieve this. The best digital campaigns do this, but are also those that are planned alongside your ground campaign.'⁴⁷ Yet, this affect is harder to produce than this suggests. Indeed, if we were to consider assemblage within social media, we could argue that the ability to utilise social media to reach an audience is dependent on a wide range of relations. In other words, affect and reach is not a given on social media, even if it is paid for. One interviewee had some control over the social media account for a candidate, and expressed the handbook's misunderstanding of it:

You'd have to be a very specific person to seek out the candidate page, or the Twitter handle for a parliamentary candidate, and then consistently liking them and

⁴⁷ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 55

retweet them. I think social media [...] is more driven on content than “here’s just a point/here’s just a funny joke to retweet and show the score.” So, unless you’re really being content-driven, it’s not going to get off as much, is it? Unless you’re a candidate like Caroline Lucas, who has got a strong and militant following behind her.⁴⁸

I argue that these individual issues of conduct and personality do not mean much by themselves, but rather in their relation to one another. In other words, Lucas’s tweets might find popularity not simply because of their content, but also partly because of her position as the only Green MP. Another interviewee told me that one Labour candidate’s most popular tweet was “where she said she was cooking a veggie chili and listening to the Manic Street Preachers.”⁴⁹ He praised her ability not to get into slanging matches, as many other Labour, Green and Conservative Twitter users did, as a particularly positive thing. And yet, her popularity is not to be compared to that of Lucas. These two examples reveal two very different ways of using social media: Lucas’ twitter feed is not necessarily that personal, her political stances attached to her position seem to combine to help her online popularity; while the other only finds popularity when she uses it to produce a human-touch. There is no one formula that will work online, as social media popularity is something more chaotic since it can appear in surprising places without clear reasoning.

To look at the use of social media as a component of an assemblage that is defined by *doing something*, as I have defined it, presents a problem. This is because the party *is* actively doing something, but is perhaps not doing it with any noticeable result. DeLanda (2006: 7) writes that a social assemblage should be ‘characterised [...] by what they are

⁴⁸ Interview 2

⁴⁹ Interview 3

capable of doing when they interact with other social entities.’ What this theorisation as well as Buchanan’s (2015) purposeful arrangement approach leaves silent is, what does it matter if an assemblage is purposeful but of no consequence; what if there is a component of an assemblage that is not affective? Political campaign assemblage seemed somewhat inconsequential from the position of my feed, substantially failing to territorialise. This is not to say that all parts of the assemblage are made invalid by this, but that the answer may be in the relations to that assemblage, despite that component.

I think the big question with social media is ‘who is listening?’ It is significant that the handbook says ‘[a]s in other forms of campaign, online campaigning is about going to where people already are, as well as attracting people to your site.’⁵⁰ This suggests not only that being active in online participation, for instance engaging in debates others start, is important, but also that advertising on these spaces may be a crucial way to expand reach. On Facebook, through a coalition of data of the user, what one sees is a personalised feed, even if the adverts are aimed more generally. In this way, advertising on social media can echo the approach of targeting an audience with a specific body of information. Social media produces something that has been termed a “filter bubble” by Eli Pariser (2011) to refer to the limits of information that you tend to be exposed to in your Internet use. Buzdag (2013: 218) explains that many Internet companies – Google, Facebook, Twitter, and so on – use ranking algorithms, that ‘might occur because online services are trying to improve accuracy at the expense of serendipity [...] Even if users wanted to diversify their network explicitly, information intermediaries silently filter out what they assume the user

⁵⁰ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 51

does not want to see, hiding information posted by the opposite end of the spectrum.’

However, there is little proof that Internet advertising works, and can engage with the chosen audience affectively.

Whilst the aim of the use of social media by the local and national campaigns was to territorialise voters, the potential audience and the resulting audience were two different things. Groshek and Koc-Michalska (2017) based their research of social media use of the 2016 US Elections on three codes of social media users: active, passive, and uncivil. By active participation they mean ‘interactive, two-way communication, or creative’, by passive they mean ‘reading, viewing or consuming’, and by uncivil they mean ‘reduce[d] politeness [...] or the willingness to open to others’ (Groshek and Koc-Michalska 2017: 1393). While I would argue that it is possible for users to be any of these three at any given time, these codes also help illuminate the difficulty of understanding people’s use of social media. Thus, while there is always a certain guaranteed audience for candidates, due to people’s interest in politics (those ‘weird’ people pointed out by Burnell), it is only during the ‘active’ or ‘uncivil’ moments where this audience is apparent. As the handbook says, ‘contrary to the stereotype, these kinds of sites are not simply a place where only young people gather.’⁵¹ Political parties have not yet figured out how to penetrate many bubbles online: I demonstrate that the presence of either the national and local campaign to my own social media bubble was limited. As such, I argue that a whole host of code problems faces any digital campaign by a political party in my social bubble.

⁵¹ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 51

The political material that was posted by people within my bubble was seldom for any of the 'established' parties. If parties did feature at all, the material was almost always against them, and the parties in power (particularly the Conservatives) received the brunt of this (Figures 6.5 and 6.6). Whereas Figure 6.5 is an un-manipulated image of Boris Johnson that reveals that he cannot play the guitar, Figure 6.6 utilises an expression on social media material that has become known as a "meme"⁵². It is the same quote from Bevan presented in the style of a Conservative poster, using their logo at the top and their blue. This post uses the established visual Tory codes and plays on a concept that below the surface this is what the Conservatives really are. Bevan's language suggests an affective feeling lingering behind the use of this language, both towards the Conservatives and Labour. It is not only an insult to the Tories, but also an implicit challenge to a 2015 Labour leadership that does not tend to use language in that way, despite their 'tory bashing' as discussed in Chapter 4.

⁵² A term developed by Richard Dawkins which means 'a unit of cultural transmission', or, as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary, 'an idea, behaviour, style or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture' ('Meme' 2017).



Figure 6.8 and 6.9: Example of anti-Conservative social media use on Facebook

Reflecting on my own social media bubble, which mostly comprises people territorialised and coded left-wing who have a cynical and jaundiced attitude to party politics, I argue that the code of “mainstream” party politics presents significant issues which restrict it from territorialising those people. In reference to Figures 6.8 and 6.9, it is clear that some were affected by the Conservative Party which expressed itself through ridicule and disgust, rather than an openness with any potential for territorialisation. Those vocal members of my feed were part of a Big P- political assemblage in that they contributed to doing something by posting images against it. Amongst this group, it is not an accepted or ‘cool’ thing to retweet or post on Facebook something when the source has been considered to reinforce the ‘centralist’ status quo. This is not material that has much spreadability. It is not that the assemblage is not purposeful, then, nor that the component (social media) is not useful, but that through the process of territorialisation, ‘an intraspecific *critical distance* between members of the same species’ occurs (Deleuze and

Guattari 2013a: 375). The coding of that territorialisation confirms that distance, and this effects the ability for relations to become with components outside that assemblage.

The lack of interaction with the campaigns generally, then, is partly to do with the way the parties were coded in my bubble. Within my social media network during the campaign, the idea of interacting with the online Labour assemblage was blighted by the negativity that the coding of New Labour had accumulated, and from which the leadership had not yet successfully decoded itself. In comparison, the Conservatives were considered New Labour-lite, or were cast as reminiscent of Thatcher's coding of the party. The Liberal Democrats, for their part, were territorialised with negativity as they had entered into the Coalition government – a betrayal, particularly to the students. The Greens were the only party who had any backing, territorialising the left-leaning in Brighton through Lucas. Again, I think the approach to social media in the general election handbook is further evidence that there was little reflection by those implementers of the abstract machine of the Labour campaign, those who were implementing the 'play book' of the campaign, as to the performance of the political party and how it related to society. I might say that many political candidates were coming *to* social media, seldom are they *of* it.

That is not to say that the Labour social media campaign did not try to territorialise through any means other than direct engagement by Labour representatives. One part of the national leadership's digital campaign strategy was to gather email addresses. Within my social group, the most spreadable website was one that told you (roughly) what number baby you were if you were born on the NHS in exchange for your birthdate and email

address.⁵³ This website was unveiled in July 2014, and I saw it posted on Facebook a few times. Your inbox was then subject to a barrage of emails purportedly from different Labour representatives, all starting with the personalised “Dear *****”. The affective result of these emails were verbal complaints of annoyance, much akin to those that followed the physical abundance of material. Indeed, perhaps the campaign’s attitude about the emails was similar to that towards much physical material: it was about volume, rather than discourse. Another approach was the use of celebrities in political advertising, who would deliver an earnest message. Spreadability was also evident in the use of celebrities whose work had already territorialised people, although I only witnessed one reposting of the comedian Steve Coogan’s plea for people to vote for Labour. None of these seemed to create a lasting relationship with Labour.

The relative failure of the campaign to become spreadable, I argue, is because social media tends to work in one’s own interests and within social networks (bubbles). Labour presented little social media content, and little in a meme style and no party, let alone Labour, managed to “go viral.” While Labour’s handbook delivered a fanciful idea that Facebook would allow access to the ‘32.5 million eligible voters on Facebook.’⁵⁴ this ‘access’ is severely limited. Buchanan (2007: 14) argues that the Internet is not automatically rhizomatic, that is, it does not make a ‘subterranean pathway connecting all our actions’. This is because ‘the rhizome is not manifest in things, but rather a latent potential that has to be realised by experimentation’ (Buchanan 2007: 13). Thus, the Internet has a rhizomatic

⁵³ ‘What number baby born on the NHS are you?’ Labour.org.uk <http://www.labour.org.uk/index.php/nhs-birthday/birthday.html>

⁵⁴ Labour. 2014. *Win 2015: The General Election Handbook*, p. 52

potential, but one that was not discovered by political party assemblages during the 2015 campaign period, and one perhaps not available through paid advertising.

Another issue is the ability to access those outside the assemblage in more conventional means, as Facebook's revenue is based on paid advertising. Unlike party-political broadcasts on television and radio, where a party is given allocated slots, unless a campaign was willing to pay for advertising on Twitter, Facebook or YouTube, the only people engaging were already-interested parties.

Accessing the feeds with these materials is a different thing from their being interacted with. Perhaps social media highlights the divides that appear between social and political assemblages, a performance of the preconceived gap between society and political parties. By following the lines of social media set out in the Election handbook, the social media accounts of the candidates were fairly dull, mostly featuring calls for retweet's, publicizing hustings or retweeting the leadership accounts. None of these uses by individual accounts engaged my social network, and most of what I saw on these accounts during the campaign was interested parties fighting it out on Twitter. For instance, one Labour member had 'an epic four-month Twitter argument with Jason Kitkat [then a Green councillor and leader of the council] about setting the budget.'⁵⁵ This argument could only be witnessed by people who followed them both on Twitter. However, as one volunteer told me, "[w]hat they are, is sometimes quite good fun to be doing, and I have been guilty about doing that in the past, but there are some people in the party [...] who just come across as barking

⁵⁵ Interview 3

mad on Twitter, some of them are councillors, because of how they use that.”⁵⁶ So, there is some affective engagement on these media, but between already-coded and territorialized members of parties.

And, while there was some success in creating a social media presence, the most pervasive factors of the national social media campaign were the Facebook advertisements which did not seem to bring with them much more interaction in my bubble. Perhaps the most affective part of the digital Labour assemblage was from outside the official campaign method: the viral phenomenon of #Milifandom, based around a Twitter user sounding her admiration, support and crush on the Labour leader (Jewell 2015). However, this phenomenon was reported more as an amusing aside by mainstream media.

In 2015, it seemed that instead of the social media campaign managing to territorialise those outside, its ready-made audience, traditional media, could feed the social media profiles. One interviewee insisted that “if you’re getting on Radio4’s *Today* programme, and suddenly your Twitter feed goes mental, and everybody has read *The Observer* and has seen their candidates on it, y’know – oh my god, that has impact.”⁵⁷ This suggests that at least for some voters, it was still the ‘traditional’ media of the press that allowed a territorialisation, or at least a popularising, of their accounts.

Whereas here I have focused on the material from the campaign, in the next chapter (in the study of the leadership campaign), I shall examine further the relationship between my social media experience and Labour after the election. These appearances were another

⁵⁶ Interview 3

⁵⁷ Interview 6

form of campaign material, but out of the direct control of the leaderships and had a very different impact. Next, I shall discuss one example of how modern social media practices had strong influences on the material Labour produced online.

THE CANVASSING PICTURE

We gathered around the street sign. There were five of us, all men. One took his smartphone out and took a 'selfie' of us. He made doubly sure to get the street sign clearly in the photo. This happened just as we had got to the area in which we were to go door-stepping. He posted it on Twitter, insisting that the selfie looked better and more affecting than the line-up photo we had done in front of the campaign shopfront that morning (we took a line-up picture every weekend-day morning). The suggestion was that line-ups looked formal and staid; by contrast selfies were informal, they made us look human, friendly, engaging. They were deemed spreadable.

The 'selfie' has become a part of the language around social media and smart phones. Frosh (2015: 1608) has defined it as a “‘gestural image” [... that] conspicuously integrate[s] still images into a technocultural circuit of corporeal social energy [...] This circuit connects the body of individuals, their mobility through physical and informational spaces, and the micro-bodily hand and eye movement they use to operate digital interfaces’. Its ‘practice is sociable’, and Frosh (2015: 1623) connects it to ‘phatic communication [...] whose primary purpose is the production, expression, and maintenance

of sociability'.⁵⁸ I question this theory by asking who benefits from the taking of selfies? Even if the selfie were immediately published on Twitter and retweeted (perhaps by the campaign's official team), who outside the followers online at the time would see it? In other words, while the photos had a definite purpose within the assemblage, was it affective in territorialising anything but those in the photo? Perhaps the practice of taking group selfies within this context might be said to have more social value to the volunteers themselves than to anybody outside.



Figure 6.10 Facebook post of line-up pictures (from left to right): Brighton Pavilion, Hove and Portslade; Kemptown and Peacehaven

⁵⁸ An aside question might be asked of this theory – has a selfie been taken if it is not shared on social media, or even personally shared?



Figure 6.11: A tweet of a door-step selfie (including myself, uncensored)

Both the selfies and the line-up pictures played a role in the campaign (see Figures 6.10 and 6.11). Both were coding bodies to show that ‘we are the Labour party’, that the campaign was an *event*. The line-up pictures were a show of numbers, of strength; the other was a show of effort and presence in real neighbourhoods. In the line-up, I heard one organiser tell his candidate that it always looked better when we spread out, rather than huddled into the store front: it sent a message we had come together, from different walks of life, to pursue the goal of putting the party in power. Both the line-up and the selfie formats were to make us look like a party peopled by a broad spectrum of people, not just either retired people or hired foot-soldiers. A digital manifestation of proof that the Labour party was a popular, peopled party full of ‘real’ people, not just Burnell’s (2013: n.a.) “weirdos”.

Yet, even when one uses the language of social media, one must still ask some questions. Did anybody see these photos? Were they affective, did they help territorialise

people? Were they just an extension of the rather staid tweets (see Figures 6.6 - .7)? Just because something is spreadable does not mean it has spreadability. They were not used in any other campaign material and I never saw these photos outside specific Labour social media bubbles. But the use of selfies tells us something about the influence that the practice of social media had on those within Labour and the desire, perhaps need, to engage through those media and to present Labour as a cohesive assemblage. However, whilst territorialising the use of selfies, in combination with other styles of social media material which may have produced Labour as an online presence, as has been said, this did not succeed in allowing them to penetrate into my own social bubble.

CONCLUSION

Phrases, such as 'An NHS with time to care', 'hard working families' or the importance of 'balancing the books' were the discursive codes Labour repeated *ad nauseam* through flyers, speeches, newspaper headlines, tweets, and so on. For those who place value in discourse, be it rational (such as Shin 2001) or affective (such as Civettini and Redlawsk 2009, or Western 2007), it is these phrases that matter as they are what the electorate is concerned with. And, indeed, this language is an important component of the campaign assemblage. However, following Protevi's (2009: xi) notion of 'political physiology', in which 'our bodies, minds, and social settings are intricately and intimately linked', I have demonstrated the importance of the material in the campaign assemblage, be it physical or digital.

Focusing on the affective role of the material within the local Labour campaign tells us a story of its agency in the assemblage. The mass-door-stepping covered in Chapter 5 and

the personalising technological techniques covered here were evidence of the anticipation of a desire to utilise a humanising method of campaigning. As I have shown, the assemblage embraced and gave their technology and material agency so that the real focus was on presence, volume and repetition of codes. This attitude reveals a campaign that expects that the material may not penetrate much further than a glance. Thus, it was the coding of the material, alongside the quantity and presence that was crucial. Through this, and alongside the technopoly's door-stepping activities, the local Labour campaign emphasised being seen to be in spaces. Despite Buchanan's (2015) questioning of the role of material, this reveals the agency and potential that focusing on material can have when applying assemblage concepts to empirical work.

This ability to cover the city in literature to such an extent was due to both the number of volunteers and the utilisation of modern technology. As we have seen in this chapter and the last, the assemblage was digital as well as physical. Where the local and national leaderships coded the use of Contact Creator in determining where and how the campaign would go into that space, Campaign Creator was then utilised to create a mass of literature that used a variation of expressions using the same font, the same red, the same boxes, the same slogans, to territorialise and perhaps try to code the space. Together, the agency of the two digital components enabled a nation-wide coordination and the emergence of a hierarchy being directed by the national leadership – a top-down assemblage that received its orders from them, and was then intended to be diligently followed by the territorialised and coded army of volunteers. This appearance of hierarchy was extended through the performance of the local leadership and many of the volunteers within the Labour campaign, as well as through the utilisation of the materials, aspiring to create the image of a seamless party venturing into an area where the leaflets were

dropped. Any sign of local agency identifying itself as individual from the national leadership was questioned, if not denied.

I also demonstrate that despite the anticipation of the role of social media, the same advance in technology is behind another important, if a somewhat ineffective (to my bubble, at least) side of the campaign. Although within the assemblage, the material was a component with much potential agency, it seemed to lack engagement. More generally, Bryne (2015: 5) has concluded that in the 2015 election, '[d]espite the millions of tweets, retweets, posts, likes, shares, and views, there is no evidence that social media played a decisive role either in boosting engagement and turnout, or in the election result.' As the Internet, smart phones and, social media became enmeshed in the campaign assemblages, it is only natural to expect the party's campaigns to target these spaces. The national campaign attempted multiple strategies to become spreadable and the NHS baby-counter example above is one such. Another important one was the use of celebrities for their cultural capital.

The language of social media was embraced by some in the hope that it would, beyond adverts, help infiltrate spaces the campaign had so far failed to enter, or at least present the leadership as somewhat human and approachable. The use of pictures of door-steppers – line-ups or selfies – became part of an assemblage that was attempting to decode Labour people as purely political, and present the duties involved in campaigning as fun and enjoyable (an 'event'), and those doing them as human. Yet, none of these methods territorialised my social media world, which did not seem to have an interest in political parties. Perhaps the presence of social media within the campaign relates to DeLanda's (2006: 12) conceptualisation that the components present in it 'are not logically necessary but only contingently obligatory.' In other words, because of the role of social media in the

everyday, it is an 'obligatory' space in which to try and territorialise. Whether it is successful or not is another question.

This chapter has contributed to electoral geography by highlighting the importance of materials in a campaign. This is evidenced both in the use of the physical material, as well as in the explorations into the utilisation of digital platforms, to both produce the material and use social media as a new way to spread Labour coding. It also continues the argument that the hierarchy of the party is emergent and performative (as seen in the struggle over the orange posters).

In the end, Labour lost the election. The technology, candidates, organisers, and volunteers did not manage to territorialise enough people; the State was not recoded Labour. The code of Labour they attempted to establish from the conference and with which they flooded the letterboxes and social media did not affect people into coming into the wider Labour assemblage. Indeed, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, it frequently felt as if the logic of the door-stepping campaign was not to convince people, but to find those who may already be sympathetic to Labour and try and get them to turn out. However, building on my argument that the election is more than simply the numerical result, the election result *did* penetrate my social media bubble thoroughly, and this became increasingly important as anti-Conservative tirades were hurled onto the platform, against a particular set of people but addressed to no one in particular. In my final empirical chapter I consider some of the affect of the election result by looking at the 2015 Labour leadership campaign.

CHAPTER 7. JEREMY CORBYN AND THE WAR MACHINE: THE 2015 LEADERSHIP CONTEST

The Labour leadership contest immediately followed Ed Miliband's resignation on 8 May 2015, the morning after the loss of the general election. This event not only penetrated my interviews, becoming an unavoidable topic of conversation, but also became a significant focus of much of the Facebook activity that I witnessed. Specifically, by following the themes of assemblage and affect, I present a focus on how Jeremy Corbyn's campaign re-worked the party assemblage. Although a leadership election may have been predictable at the time of the design of my fieldwork, it was only one possible line of flight: as Connolly (2011: 71) has argued, 'In a world of becoming, emergent formations are often irreducible to patterns of efficient causality, purposive time, simple probability, or long cycles of recurrence.' As such, while some may look for a 'logical' and 'rational' explanation for the loss of the general election and the rise of Corbyn, I utilise an affect-based approach that bears witness to a multiplicity of influences (some of which were more direct than others), concerned with the (de)territorialisation(s) of the assemblages, and desires to (re)code Labour.

The leadership contest became a seismic Deleuzian 'event'. Or, rather, the Corbyn campaign did, it was 'rhizomatic' as it seemed to make new connections, revealing the potential to change and reshape 'the conceptual and fabric of connectivity [and] relationships' in the Labour Party (Beck and Gleyzon 2017: 329). As I have already written, I was not originally planning to cover the aftermath of the general election within the party, originally conceiving that the affect of the election result would be witnessed through social

media (and, as we shall see, this medium did bear witness to the affective reaction of that result). However, as the leadership contest's presence in my life grew I had to change this thesis, otherwise I would not be allowing my project to *become* in relationship to the subject. It was a feature of every interview, whether I had planned questions about it or not, as well as in my everyday experience of social media. This chapter, then, is the result of the rhizomatic potential of the becoming of the 'research-assemblage' (Fox and Alldred 2015: 403) that this thesis attempts to be. In other words, it is a line of flight, an unpredictable expressions of an assemblage. One interviewee told me that he was delighted that Labour had managed to dominate the media headlines for three weeks because the last time Labour did that was during the last leadership contest in 2010. *The Guardian* reported that Jeremy Corbyn made it onto the leadership ballot 'with minutes to spare' on 15 June 2015, as a Left-wing candidate within the party meant only to broaden the conversation (Wintour and Mason 2015: n.a.). He was far from the favourite to win.

During the contest, Corbyn's campaign became the focus. Its popularity and the struggle against it, brought to the fore the fundamental question: 'who and what is the Labour Party?' more so than had the general election or indeed the conferences. Talks of 'entryism' to the party were featured both in my interviews and in the press (see Ross 2015, Grice 2015), partly due to the £3-supporters fee introduced under Miliband's changes to the leadership election format. Through this reform, the three voting blocks of old (the PLP, the Unions and membership) were replaced by a One-Member-One-Vote system, with the additional group of the aforementioned £3-supporters who also received a vote for the leadership. Both these changes were approved by 82.69% of a special conference in 2013, thus creating the potential to open-up the party to a new swathe of people. It was argued at the time that this removal of blocs was a political ploy to remove power from the unions

(BBC News 2014a, 2014b), while Miliband publicly touted it as the way to open the party to having a mass membership again. However, under him, the total membership and supporters never reached the 400,000 mark he was seeking. Indeed, while it saw a small increase under his leadership, it was only during the leadership campaign that the eligible voting body became at least 422,000 with 251,000 (59.5%) of those voting for Corbyn.

In his account of Corbyn's rise, Richard Seymour (2016) argues that it was due to a combination of policies, personality, career, and campaigning technique. He explains that Corbyn's campaign created a discourse of his history as an unwavering, campaigning Bennite Socialist with a very good reputation as a local MP: he was '[e]ver the activist, never the operator' (Seymour 2016: 19) whose platform for Labour, as an organisation, is to (re)construct it through 'the techniques of movement building' (Seymour 2016: 21), as he did with his leadership campaign. Corbyn's rise is timely, he argues, and is in-line with

the latest group of radical Leftists to punch well above their weight because they saw where the establishment was failing and articulated the right ideas. Whether it is Syriza in Greece, or Podemos in Spain, or even Bernie Sanders in the United States, the sudden surges in support for individuals and groups who were previously marginalised arises from the same type of crisis' (Seymour 2016: 27).

A well-researched, if somewhat traditional, narrative comes through Seymour's analysis, and although I agree and empathise with much of it, he only recounts that people were attracted to the campaign. By contrast, I focus on the affects churning through the campaign, looking at how the contest to (re)code the Labour leadership and territorialised Labour was felt by some within that assemblage, and by others (on social media) who had had a (previously) reluctant relationship with the party.

This chapter is in three sections. First, I shall set out the theoretical framework I use to analyse the assemblage around Jeremy Corbyn's campaign. I argue that using Deleuze and Guattari's (2013a) concept of the 'war machine' is insightful for drawing out the affects

around his campaign. Then I shall explore how the campaign became in two spaces. The first is what the leadership campaign meant for those already-territorialised and coded Labour (in other words my interviewees). I show how the leadership election and related events highlighted questions about who and what the Labour Party was. The third section focuses on the second space, the digital: the reaction to Jeremy Corbyn on social media. This is important because it was a space largely absent during the general election within my own social media bubble, but it became vibrant during this event. Through this, I shall emphasise the importance of understanding spaces of online conversations. This is not a focus on how and why they created the social media campaign (as per the previous chapter), but on what happened during that campaign and, how finding it to be affective, it changed my resultant thesis. I argue this leadership campaign was a direct result of the election and is part of its 'event'. The aftermath of a campaign - how the result resonates - is an important part of the election, and witnesses the party assemblage as it is shocked by the affective result of the election. This chapter contributes to electoral geography through its demonstration that the result of the election is affective and is enmeshed with events after its manifestation. Through its focus on social media, it also contributes to political geography by showing how big P- politics is blurred with small p- online, as well as how social media allows big P- politics to interact with digital popular culture.

THE WAR MACHINE

Every war machine is unique and every occurrence has a unique relation to the State. Deleuze and Guattari (2013: 410-1) hold the State up as what the war machine is not and what it can never become: they explain that it is always '*becoming*', rather than

implementing binary distributions [...] the war machine is another species, another nature, another origin than the State apparatus'. They compare the State to the game of chess, where the 'pieces are coded; they have internal and intrinsic properties from which their movement, their situations, and confrontations derive. They have qualities' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 411). By contrast, the war machine is the Chinese game of Go, where:

pieces [...] are pellets, disks, simple arithmetic units, and have only an anonymous, collective, or third-person function. "It" makes a move. "It" could be a man, a woman, a louse, an elephant. Go pieces are elements of a nonsubjectified machine assemblage with no intrinsic properties, only situational ones [...] a Go piece has only a milieu of exteriority [...] Go is war without battle lines, with neither confrontation nor retreat, without battles even: pure strategy, whereas chess is a semiology [...] the space is not all the same: in chess, it is a question of arranging a closed space for oneself [...] In Go, it is a question of arraying oneself in an open space, of holding space, of maintaining the possibility of springing up at any point [...] The "smooth" space of Go, as against the "striated" space of chess [...] chess codes and decodes space, whereas Go proceeds [...] [by] territorializing or deterritorializing it (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 411-2)

In other words, we can understand the war machine as a social body that is composed through its relations and the meaning of it is an expression of these relations. It can be an amorphous, hard to grasp assemblage that is always changing, always becoming. I argue that this passage suggests that the war machine is, I think, remarkably similar to DeLanda's (2006: 9) theory of assemblage, where assemblages are constructed by '*relations of exteriority*: the component parts are constituted by the very relations they have to other parts. A part detached from such a whole, ceases to be what it is'.

For Deleuze and Guattari, this type of assemblage is limited to the war machine. The State is the opposite of becoming: where '[t]here has always been a State: quite perfect, quite complete', the war machine's very becoming 'is directed against the State-form, actual or virtual' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 418). As such, the State

is defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve. Special institutions are thus necessary to enable a chief to

become a man of State, but diffuse, collective mechanisms are just as necessary to prevent a chief from becoming one. Mechanisms for warding off, preventing mechanisms, are part of chieftainship and keep an apparatus distinct from the social body from crystallizing [...] *war* in primitive societies as the surest mechanism directed against the formation of the State [...] It should not be concluded that war is a state of nature, but rather that it is the mode of a social state that wards off and prevents the State (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 416-7).

Thus, we have the State and the war machine in contrast to one another, if not directly.

Both State and war machine are organic, and they war and fight against one another, affecting one another, perhaps destroying or consuming one another. What Deleuze and Guattari perhaps theorized is not how to analyse the State itself, but rather an understanding of what rallies against it, how it becomes, and its relation to the State. The war machine is temporary, it does not conserve – it is always becoming.

The 'war machine' has been variously interpreted. One of most the prominent interpretations is by Hardt and Negri, who have named their war machine 'the multitude'. For them, this is, as Keucheyan (2014: 88) has put it, 'the new subject of emancipation, which has replaced the working class in this role'. Unlike the Marxist conceptualisation of the working class who might be said to have a defining relationship with capitalism, or modern identity politics, 'the concept of multitude refers to a multiplicity of individuals. This multitude possess no unity' (Keucheyan 2014: 89). Tampio (2009: 384) has criticised Hardt and Negri for superimposing a Leninist-Marxist perspective onto the concept, naming it as 'the *multitude* [...] a war machine combating the State apparatus, the composition of a joyful political body, and the full social body without organs [...] they seek to go "beyond" Deleuze by fabricating a concept of political subjectivity for postmodernity'. Their desire to *code* the war machine, Tampio argues, limits its use to 'the multitude'. However, it is not such a restricted concept and is just one potential of the war machine, for as Deuchars (2011: n.a.) writes: 'many social forms can constitute the war machine. They can take the

form of artistic movements all the way to revolutionary movements'. The war machine is not one thing, rather it is more to be found as a spirit of becoming that differs radically from anything that Deleuze and Guattari deem 'Statist' (although not opposing binaries, as that would itself be Statist).

As such, while I have been attempting to study the Labour Party as a Statist assemblage (it is conceptualised as State organ, and the leadership perhaps as State itself for the sake of this chapter), I argue that Jeremy Corbyn's campaign fits the description of the war machine. It was anti-Statist and used novel methods to territorialise a diverse group of people in and into the Labour assemblage.

'A LEADER [...] IS ALWAYS IN DANGER OF BEING ABANDONED'

Corbyn's success cannot be understood in isolation to Labour, but through the multiplicity of things that created the space that allowed for his popularity. Once he was provided a platform, it was his 'way-of-being' that affectively territorialised people, as conceptualised by Page and Dittmer (2016: 77): what he 'says or does matters less than *what is felt*'. As such, Corbyn embodies a set of values and ideas to his audience. However, to much of Corbyn's assemblage (and, indeed, to Corbyn himself), he is 'more like a leader or a star than a man of power and is always in danger of being disavowed, abandoned by his people' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 416). This is because those who were territorialised by his campaign, thus becoming part of the Corbyn and wider Labour assemblage for this campaign, were already open to the space he coded in the Labour Party. In other words, Corbyn's campaign presented a potential that this audience desired in Labour, and they were both territorialised by it, as well as territorialising it. I argue that he managed to do so

because his past already contained those codes, allowing his campaign to code itself in contrast to the understanding of the Labour leadership since Tony Blair's rise to it in 1994. It is not that these figures (Blair, Corbyn, Obama, and so on) are without their remarkable features; they are not empty vessels. But there is a certain embodiment which moves past words and sometimes actions, and as it becomes entrenched, it becomes hard to knock these leaders off the pedestal on which their fellows put them. It is through their relationship to the rest of the assemblage that these 'leaders' become important. However, as I shall discuss in the conclusion, as he takes a hierarchical place in a structure, the man of the war machine is placed in a precarious position: by being endowed with a position in a 'State', he cannot remain purely a man of the war machine. However, during the leadership contest, he was not in that position yet, and instead was the figurehead of a war machine, performing a different way of politics. As I argued in Chapter 4, Thrift (2004) has written about the certain ways these people performed a politician, and the other three candidates attempted to repeated that. Corbyn, however, did not do so.

An outsider of the leadership contest when it started, Corbyn was a relatively quiet, campaigning back-bench Bennite Labour MP who had been the MP of Islington North in London for 32 years. Seymour (2016: 31) writes that he was 'initially estimated by bookkeepers to be a rank outsider, with 100-1 odds of winning.' This is in contrast to how one interviewee felt about a month into the leadership campaign, when she expressed the excitement behind the Corbyn campaign:

I think Jeremy Corbyn's helped create that excitement. I think that he's our Podemos, or he's our Syriza. He, and he's probably, and I mean, if he becomes the leader, we can't tell, we're only less than a month into the campaign, and there's two months to go, and his campaign is snowballing. We don't know how big that snowball's going to get, and we don't know when the campaign's going to stop growing, and we don't know if it's going to contract, but at the moment, its growing.

If he becomes the leader, he'll probably be the most unambitious person ever to become leader, and that's his winning, that's his ace, if you ask me.⁵⁹

The interviewee above had evidently invested heavily in Corbyn, going so far as to link his leadership bid with the establishment of new political parties in Spain and Greece less than a month into the leadership campaign. This context is important, and Seymour (2006) has argued that the rise of Corbyn should be understood in line with these and other movements. By highlighting these movements together, we can see how outside the 'State' this campaign was considered: it was part of an insurgent, populist left-wing. Her enthusiasm also reveals how the campaign was affecting some people, making it difficult to talk about anything else at times during the leadership election. She went unstoppably on, enthusing passionately that "when you hear Jeremy talk, he's not there to become leader, he's there to spread the truth about politics and economics and he's doing a brilliant job at it, and if he becomes leader that'll be even better [laughs]."⁶⁰ She was projecting that his leadership would be unique, something outside the State, insisting that it could not be absorbed, territorialised or coded by the State (this will be discussed briefly in the conclusion).

Corbyn's campaign and stance was something to believe in, to hope for, to follow. Yet his code did not resonate with everyone coded and territorialised as Labour in the previous election campaign. One interviewee left the party, finding that none of the leadership contestants had any appeal:

⁵⁹ Interview 1

⁶⁰ Interview 1

you look at Corbyn - and obviously, people are very passionate about Corbyn, and he's dull as well. I mean, he's not a great speaker [...] he's no Tony Benn when it comes to rabble rousing, he's not even Michael Foot when it comes to really speaking. So, they're in trouble as well if he's the best they've got [...] these very passionate aspects of the party have pinned their colours to quite unimpressive examples of their sort of team.⁶¹

This speaks to the way of 'performing' a politician. In contrast to those orators, some claimed that his unrefined, dull, un-charming personality was one of his attractions. Indeed, David Cameron's comment in the House of Commons in 2016 that Corbyn should 'put on a suit, do up your tie and sing the national anthem' (Hughes 2016: n.a.) attests to the idea that Corbyn was not coded by the same political party/society divide that was performed throughout the conferences and general election campaigns. Corbyn's popularity rested both more for what he had come to stand for, and what he had *not*. For many, he might be able to decode Labour from New Labour. As I argued in Chapter 4, he was performing a different way of being a politician, one that was not yet swallowed by the logic of State.

As I theorised in Chapter 2, any assessment of a candidate is not a rational process, but one imbued with affect. As such, some potentially contradictory aspects come to the fore, such as the much-touted gap between (particularly career) politicians and the State. One interviewee was under the impression that Corbyn's thirty-two years as a backbench MP was a signal that he could bridge that gap, saying:

people on the door-step who are not politically active, that's how they see it – 'they're all in it for their own ends, they've all got their noses in the trough, they're all careerists, they just want a job. Why don't they go out and get a real job?' All that sort of thing, you hear it on the door-step. Jeremy Corbyn, the perception is that he's not like that.⁶²

⁶¹ Interview 3

⁶² Interview 10

This somewhat contradicts the issue of career politicians being separated from society, as Corbyn appears to be part of it in this understanding. Seymour argues that it is Corbyn's commitment to campaigning politics which is the real differentiation, someone that never left the unions and marches behind. Following DeLanda's theorisation of assemblage, it is possible to argue that part of the appeal of Corbyn comes through his relations to the wider Parliamentary assemblage, as much as to Labour itself, as well as his relations to the political, media, social and social media assemblages that these assemblages are part of.

While Corbyn's campaign then seems to have affected people and echoed war machines abroad, it would be misplaced to not be attentive to the specific context within the UK. I argue that it was a particular context that helped to create this war machine assemblage. Issues arose around the planning and performance of the 2015 general election campaign – in other words, its abstract plan – as it was a continuation of the marketing, statist-style developed by Blair, and it did not manage to territorialise enough people, even though they were already within the Labour assemblage. It failed to deliver its desired coding, specifically to recode Miliband himself as 'prime ministerial' or 'a normal bloke' as distinct from the 'weird' coding which he had obtained for eating a bacon sandwich (Martinson 2015; see Figure 7.1).



Figure 7.1: The Sun newspaper 7 May 2015 front page. The picture was taken May 2014 and reproduced widely.

The wide reproduction of this photograph is further testament to the potential lines of flight a component may take in creating new assemblages (Page and Dittmer 2015). Whereas the photo originally stems from a series showing Miliband buying flowers for his wife and having breakfast, it acquired agency in relation to his position as Labour leader and newspapers coding him as ‘weird’. This coding from the right-wing media had the potential to nullify the desired Labour coding of Miliband, even within the Labour assemblage. For instance, the day after a TV debate a Labour campaigner told me of her horror when Miliband looked and addressed the camera. “What was that?” she asked, having previously defended him against being ‘weird’. Miliband’s personality came over as that of the proverbial ‘damp squib’, as one of the most common things heard on the door-step was that we, in Labour, had “chosen the wrong brother.” One interviewee suggested that people felt sorry for, rather

than inspired, by Miliband⁶³. The campaign seemed to fail to code Labour as they wished, as coding of his conference speech in 2014 attests. By contrast, Corbyn seemed to surge in popularity with those on the 'fringe' of Labour as they found he reflected back some of what they wished for – an unflinching socialist who had never voted for a neoliberal policy, frequently voting against his own party while it was in power (two other characteristics that suggest his campaign qualifies as a war machine). What was surprising was that his campaign made this space within the Labour leadership, so coded with post-political issues as it was.

Corbyn's campaign affected not just those already in the Labour Party assemblage: the war machine territorialised people both outside and within it, thus revealing its rhizomatic potential. The rapid growing of the membership, in numbers and in support for him, increased the size of the assemblage. Importantly for the membership, the war machine was successful in territorialising and coding people as 'Corbynites' who came to those local Labour assemblages. This is something that the party under Miliband did not seem to manage to do.

Yet, it was not just that many of those people were new to Labour since the campaign was successful at territorialising people (sometimes back) into the party, in the name of Corbyn. There was discourse around Corbyn's campaign of Labour as potentially a mass movement (again) that defies the overriding narrative of the managerial politics of New Labour and speaks of empowerment. This challenged the Weberian coding of Labour as a professional party whose only mission was electoral victory, nothing else. One

⁶³ Interview 3

interviewee described those joining as both “new voters and ex-voters, as in people who stopped voting for Labour after the Iraq War debacle.”⁶⁴ Unlike Miliband (who was part of New Labour), Corbyn was never coded as *promoting* the Iraq War, but instead with *challenging* it. Another interviewee mentioned this as well: Labour supporters were returning, having left after the then-Labour leadership joined the Iraq War. This is an important aspect because it tells us that the memory of Blair hung over Labour, thus giving the war machine something specific to define itself against. Blair has been accredited with professionalising the party, and also removing democratic structures, thus affecting members’ relationships with it. In this light, Corbyn, by voting against New Labour 428 times, allowed himself to become coded as something of an anti-Blairite (Phelps 2015), and thus anti-State. It was held up that Corbyn was a man of principle, an honest man, unlike the other (‘careerist’/Statist) politicians who cowered behind the post-political style of leadership.

The affective relations of the war machine, thus, have to be understood within a context. The coding of Corbyn as the old Left (an unflinching and principled Left, at that) meant that his campaign was able to territorialise both the ‘left’ who were still within Labour, those who had left Labour for various reasons over their life time, and those who had never been in the Labour assemblage.

It was his way of being in the world, as these campaigns rely on the affective ‘way of being’ (Page and Dittmer 2017). In the war machine, Corbyn was a vessel invested in rather than being, *per se*, an autonomous power. In other words, the codes with which people

⁶⁴ Interview 4

read Corbyn, helped to create an assemblage that territorialised, reterritorialised, and deterritorialised many different relationships with Labour. This war machine created a specific opening of the State's machinery, and it becomes hard to divorce the assemblage from the head because agency has been invested in he who is credited with bringing that assemblage together. Such agency was invested in Corbyn by those he territorialised, and when Statist figures try to claim it back, it somewhat becomes an 'us-against-the-world' mentality. This was made plain as Corbyn went through a second leadership election in 2016 after his leadership was continuously questioned by fellow MPs. This is testament that the (re)coding of the Labour Party and leadership was something that did not happen simply through Corbyn's victory, that the war machine and the State are still in battle.

REASSEMBLING THE LABOUR PARTY

The multitude that came both from inside and outside the party to support Corbyn brings us back to the question: who and what is the Labour Party? If the war machine is not of the State, can it include people who have been involved in the State? The approach of the war machine may be seen by some within State apparatuses with some suspicion. How do these different assemblages converge? As we shall see, there was some sense of ownership amongst the membership of the party – they felt coded by the party, and that's how they coded themselves. At the same time, what was Labour to those who just joined the party during the leadership campaign? This was a moment of intensive de/re/territorialisation and de/re/coding of the leadership and people.

There was a clear method for providing a new leadership for Labour. As I have explained above, after the selection of candidates by MPs (the hopefuls had to secure the

nominations of 15% of the PLP), a period of campaigning followed before the vote was subsequently put to the membership on a one-member-one-vote basis. During this campaign, the four candidates who were successful presented four different abstract machines for the party. This campaign did not happen behind closed doors, but in public: in town halls and newspapers, and on radio, TV and social media. These four bids were involved in trying to recode the Labour Party by securing the largest vote by the membership and £3-supporters.

Each of these different campaigns had different abstract machines to try to territorialise and (re)code the Labour assemblage, and battled with different previous codings and territorialisations of the membership and leadership. Particularly, as we have seen above, notions of New Labour still hung heavily on the codings of Labour and this affected the ability of some of the candidates to territorialise members. The leadership selection process was a point at which that de/re-territorialisation intensified: when it was possible that internal assemblages could splinter and die, and perhaps new ones could form.

The leadership campaign had different effects depending on its relationship to the previous coding of party, to the leadership and others, and to the politics of the candidates. It is not that a genealogical history was at play here, but that these codes become virtuals within components of the assemblage, thus helping to construct the actual, sometimes affective, relationship a component has to the (potential) leaderships. One interviewee, who only became a member of the party when Corbyn became a viable option, said she only joined “when Corbyn [...] said he would stand, he was trying to get the 35

nominations.”⁶⁵ Previously, she had almost joined the Green Party, and expressed sympathy for me having volunteered in Hove under a “Blairite”, not something she would have done. Another, who was so involved in a local general election campaign that he wrote and edited some of the local literature, resigned his membership, commenting that he had “been mulling it for a while, and the last straw was the welfare bill. But, I also went to the hustling [...] with the leadership [and] deputy leadership candidates - and, erm, it was just dismal. It was just a dismal event.”⁶⁶ Thus, Corbyn’s campaign’s resonance machine was also a dissonance machine, meaning that people would also be put off by his success. Although, in this case, it was not the Corbyn campaign alone as he was not territorialised by any of the contenders. And while the interviewee could rationalise, it seemed to be more about a sour taste (an embodied affect) Labour was leaving in his mouth, rather than this rationalisation. This particular person had been a member for twenty years since the age of seventeen, and the leadership campaign saw him terminate his membership: he was being deterritorialised by Labour. He went on to say the £3-supporters were the final straw. This came amongst accusations of ‘entryism’ within the press (Ross 2015; Wintour 2015). This £3-supporters fee directly raised the question of ‘who is Labour?’, or who deserves to vote for the leadership:

because, y’know, I’ve put in probably hundreds of hours in the last two years - door-knocking, delivering, strategy meetings, writing leaflets, answering emails [...] And what I’ve noticed is that there’s quite specifically *Greens*, in Brighton and Hove, who seem to have a feeling they can help the Labour Party be better, almost a conscious wing, so they’re all signing up to vote for Corbyn, when quite clearly [...] in my opinion they do not support the party and its aims, they’re actually opposing it quite powerfully. So, that was kind of the, that was another thing that pissed me off.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Interview 1

⁶⁶ Interview 3

⁶⁷ Interview 3

Another agreed with this, arguing that the £3-supporters was a threat to the party as in “who are these people?”

How silly is this, to advertise £3 pounds to sign up? [...] I mean, I worry about it, actually: theoretically, what could happen [...] is the leadership election process could be rendered invalid, ‘cos of the number of people who compromise the three-quid election. If you’re not asking the criteria [...] how mad you must be to, to, make it, y’know - available [...] Whoever dreamt that one up [...] It’s never going to be a reform where you didn’t have to have any sort of [...] at least a sort of expression of an interest in the organization.⁶⁸

The issues around the influx of new members and £3-supporters revealed that Corbyn’s assemblage undermined the image of Labour being ‘closed’, showing that it could potentially embrace itself as an ‘open-whole’, where components flowed in and out of it, embracing the rhizomatic potential of the war machine. However, whether they supported Corbyn or not, some members who had experienced the previous campaign felt the party assemblage should be closed, and they had the right to code it. The idea of people who had not paid their dues having a say was a threat to their feeling of ownership.

On the other hand, at least two of the constituency membership secretaries I talked to were excited to report that their local parties had doubled or more. To them, that was fantastic news. One commented that they had not had this number of members, even in the halcyon days of Tony Blair’s early leadership.

However, if Labour could claim a large rise in their paid-up members, would those new members actually turn up and do something? Could they be coded Labour, rather than just Corbynites? Is being coded as part of an assemblage simply paying a yearly fee and having a membership card? Or does one have to earn that membership, does one have to

⁶⁸ Interview 5

‘suffer’ with Labour, as I did during the general election campaign? In other words, what does it mean to be part of a political party assemblage? The answer was not obvious, and it was a struggle acknowledged by those overseeing the new members:

Our local membership in our branch, we had 52 members as of the 6th of May, since the 7th of May we’ve increased it by 40 [...] very happy at that [...] even in the Blair days, apparently, we never reached a hundred members [...] And, we had our first meeting with new members - not many turned up, half a dozen or so, maybe 8 new members out of that 40 turned up. We just had a social really - drinks and wine and beer, and hired a room, and a few nibbles, whinged about the ward and Nancy spoke to us as well. They’d all joined since the election, and they were saying that they were very pleased, all of them were pleased with the win of Jeremy Corbyn, and all of them had very big smiles on their faces when we said yes, we were pleased as well. They were a bit concerned that we were old Labour and Blairite Labour, ‘cos we’d been there for a long time. But that’s not quite the truth, is it, in every branch?⁶⁹

Another interviewee said that she received emails from new members concerned that they did not want to simply attend “business meetings”, but wanted to get involved in something more.⁷⁰

The new members threw light on what membership meant for many to be able to be coded as Labour by their peers: turning up to meetings, handing out leaflets, knocking on doors. Indeed, the person who had left the week I interviewed them said the best thing, perhaps the only thing appealing, about the party, was the social aspect:

It’s a pretty thankless task being an activist in the Labour party. The best thing is the sort of social aspect of it, there’s lots of good drinks parties, barbeques, and picnics, and things like that. I always enjoyed that, but, really, in terms of, y’know, determining policy, having any sort of *power* as a member, I mean, really it is some sort of, there is none. There’s no input into policy in any real sense - branch meetings, and other meetings, are *almost* unpolitical.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Interview 9

⁷⁰ Interview 7

⁷¹ Interview 3

An important part of what it meant to be coded Labour was thus to be ‘active’ in the sense that one socialised between campaigning, *and* campaigned for Labour in the general election. This being ‘active’ did not mean being politically active, but bureaucratically and socially active. The leadership which formed the membership entrance requirements did not require all people to be political or social. What they really sought was a participation in door-stepping activity. Or, as one interviewee insisted at the start of our interview, “really, I just describe myself as a foot soldier.”⁷²

Like the influx of new members, the £3-supporters played an important role. In one CLP in a Tory area, the number of supporters was reckoned to reach 360 people, more than double the size of the party during the general election. Again, the issue was: who were these people? One of the most controversial aspects of the leadership race became the ‘£3 supporters.’ The entry of these supporters presented a crisis to an assemblage that was understood as internally homogenous. During the leadership campaign claims were made that both the ‘left’ and the ‘right’ encouraged ‘entryism’ into Labour to skew the vote towards Corbyn. On the right, *The Telegraph* encouraged their readers to do so (Telegraph Comment Desk 2016); while on the left, Labour MP John Hamm claimed that ‘Militant Tendency’⁷³ types [were] coming back in’ (Lyons and Henry 2015: n.a.). One interviewee put forward their anxieties: “I suppose my concern is the right-wing press is supporting Corbyn. Not supporting Corbyn, but promoting the distance between him and the other candidates, they would, wouldn’t they?”⁷⁴ Such issues were important, because Labour’s Rule Book has

⁷² Interview 10

⁷³ The Militant Tendency was a Trotskyist entryist group in Labour in the between the 1960s and 1980s.

⁷⁴ Interview 5

strict guidelines about member's associations with other parties and opinions that differ from Labour, which left some vocally left-wing public figures, such as comedians Mark Steel and Jeremy Hardy, and director Ken Loach, unable to join the party (Johnston 2015).

The NEC introduced an element of vetting these new members by some long-coded members. This turned out to be casual. One interviewee expressed an exasperation with the party's vetting, asking how he was supposed to know if the new members were genuine or not. What this fear of insurgence means to those worried by it, is an image of a party intensely becoming otherwise than what they had imagined it to be – being too heterogeneous, or just coded completely differently. They were perhaps worried that they would both end up decoded and deterritorialised by this new Labour, both in terms of leadership and membership, and that these newbies were not 'properly' Labour. When the membership scheme was changed, it had not seemed obvious that a left-wing candidate would emerge, let alone have such an effect on the active makeup of the party. The leadership contest opened the door to a lot of different people, revealing the potential rhizomatic quality within the assemblage, and therefore producing a change in the identity of the assemblage. In the next section, I will look at the use of social media during the leadership campaign in order to further explore the makeup of the circulation of these affects online. Although somewhat exclusive to my 'bubble' online, I believe it illuminates some of the affect around the leadership contest.

DIGITAL SOCIAL MEDIA

In this section, I (re)pose the question: what does it mean for the Labour party assemblage to be 'becoming' on the Internet? Whereas above I have looked at the relations of those

within the party to those coming (back) into the party, in this section, I focus on my social bubble, many of whom were being territorialised by Corbyn's campaign. This section is about the rhizomatic potentials that brought 'into play very different regimes and signs' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 22) than other Labour online campaigns which did not have access to. As I argued in the last chapter, I feel the absence of pro-party material in my social media bubble during the general election suggests that the campaign failed to territorialise those I was observing. It was not that people were not involved in the Labour assemblage (many voted for it), but they were not affected by the campaign to the extent that they would publish online.

However, a month after the general election, on 6 June 2015, the Labour Party's Facebook account boasted that 'An extraordinary 41,134 people – and counting – have joined our party in the last month'. It went on to suggest that by joining individuals could 'create change, help us fight back against this government, or take a stand for your values.' Three months later, on 12 September 2015, Labour's leadership election had 554,272 eligible voters (BBC News 2015b). I argue that this was the first time a political party campaign 'went viral' in the UK.

In acknowledging and studying that affect through my bubble I should be attentive, as Postman points out (1993), to the inherent biases of the technology. I thus argue that Lingdren's theorisation of 'spreadability' (2015) discussed in the last chapter seems inattentive to relations of the information being shared – spreadable to whom, where, how, when, why? Space matters on the Internet, and how and where we use that space changes, and what we access that space on. This is partly dependent on both the user as well as the programmed limitations of that space and as Groshek and Koc-Michalska (2017: 1393) found, 'different social media platforms may facilitate more uncivil behaviour.' Twitter, for

instance, is limited to 140 characters with the potential of pictures, while Instagram's focus is on images with hashtags. Twitter lends itself to short headline messages and clipped conversations, while Instagram lends itself to 'liking' and sharing pictures. Twitter has become somewhat notorious in some circles for the practice of 'trolling', which means to send 'uncivil' messages to another user (Groshek and Koc-Michalska 2017: 1393). Moreover, the Facebook 'friends' one interacts with are not necessarily the same as the Twitter accounts one follows: each site can be used quite differently (Hughes et al. 2012). Finally, these are not just 'social' bubbles, but user-based and algorithmic ones too: both sites have ranking algorithms that compose the social media space. As Katharine Viner explains:

Algorithms such as the one that powers Facebook's news feed are designed to give us more of what they think we want – which means that the version of the world we encounter every day in our own personal stream has been invisibly curated to reinforce our pre-existing beliefs. When Eli Pariser, the co-founder of Upworthy, coined the term "filter bubble" in 2011, he was talking about how the personalised web – and in particular Google's personalised search function, which means that no two people's Google searches are the same – means that we are less likely to be exposed to information that challenges us or broadens our worldview, and less likely to encounter facts that disprove false information that others have shared. (Viner 2016: n.a)

The algorithms change how the site functions for each user. Just and Latzer (2017) argue that these ranking algorithms turn the Internet into a space where it is 'governance by algorithms':

[A]lgorithmic selection on the Internet has become a growing source of and factor in social order, in a shared social reality in societies, which is increasingly being co-constructed by automated algorithmic selection on the Internet. Automated algorithmic selection applications shape realities and daily lives, increasingly affect the perception of the world, and influence behaviour. They influence not only what we think but also how we think about it and consequently how we act, thereby co-shaping the construction of individuals' realities, structurally similar but essentially different to mass media. (Just and Latzer 2017: 254).

Viner, Just and Latzer perhaps underestimate the human-hand in creating these ranking algorithms that can be distorted and manipulated by the programmers and companies that

made them in the first place. Just and Lazter perhaps overstate how isolated we are online by avoiding the issues of the physical world to highlight the digital one, thus neglecting that the Internet and the media we use on it are just one source of information and social interaction. Nevertheless, as social media grow in influence, they have a powerful concern in questioning who or what is helping to co-construct 'social reality.' Passonen et al. (2015: 2) have argued that social media is inherently a space of affect:

Facebook [...] invites and facilitates the creation and maintenance of social connections with "friends," consisting of family, acquaintances, and strangers who are geographically dispersed. Facebook's circulations of links, images, invitations, videos, and pieces of text are driven by individuals' interest in and quest for affective encounters with others, and for waves of amusement and curiosity. More than an instrument or "tool" for social exchange, however, Facebook configures these interactions and encounters. An individual's wall is not based solely on her or his choice but is a continually self-updating news feed cogenerated by friends, corporate sponsors, site architecture and design, and the organization of data as modulated by the algorithms used. Intent, agency, and affect thereby become to some extent contingent outcomes of the network itself rather than of human agency alone.

Or, as Adey et al. (2016: 13) argue, 'intimacies, altered and made possible by social media – and even its absence – involve complex blurrings of personal, public, and private, as well the possibility of reinstatement of other demarcations.' The internet is, thus, not the coming of the 'cyber-utopianists' space of liberation, with 'an audience set free from any restraining power structures or systems that sort speaking subjects into hierarchical categories with different degrees of freedom to manoeuvre' (Lingdren 2015: 3). Nor is it, on the other hand, the 'cyber-pessimists' space of 'Orwellian and panoptical surveillance, of digital divides and black holes in the network society, and of capitalist exploitation on digital steroids' (Lingdren 2015: 4).

Instead, social media spaces are continuously changing, arguably becoming increasingly individual-yet-interlinked experiences of cyberspace. This is, of course, Kranzberg's (1986: 454) first law of technology: '[t]echnology is neither good nor bad; nor is

it neutral.’ The social aspect remains crucial to them: it is in these spaces where many people ‘socially’ interact frequently each day. And, social media is not just an occasional tool, but pervasive in many areas, and is giving ‘rise to novel modes of constant, negotiated, and mediated interactions through [...] absent presence or connected relationships’ (Adey et al. 2016: 10). As such, we should be attentive to not only how the spaces are used, but what they are used for and when. The audience on social media is fairly limited and the way it spreads is *limiting*, but I wonder if ‘bubble’ is the right term for these interlinked experiences. Indeed, by giving so much agency to social media, we potentially isolate it from the contexts in which it is used. In other words, we still use digital social media in physical spaces.

Social media is part of the everyday, and while some qualitative studies have sought the bases of where people converse (Dittmer 2008), Wright (2012) and Graham et al. (2016) have argued that it is when an issue tips into a more general social media space that they become important. They describe not overly specialised social media spaces as ‘third space’: defined as ‘a formally non-political online discussion space where political talk can emerge’ (Graham et al. 2016: 13). This is because ‘the vast majority of (everyday) political talk between “ordinary” citizens online is most likely to occur’ (Wright 2012: 6) in spaces that are not ‘officially’ political. The ‘political talk’ I focus on is the big P- political, but its use on social media reveals how it is part of the everyday considerations of users. I identify that the space of a social media conversation is not necessarily the platform it is on (Facebook, Twitter or the hashtag, etc.), but rather in the moments which make them so. We can understand a conversation between two political officials on Twitter as a political space, just as we might argue that the extremely popular Instagram hashtag ‘#catsofinstagram’ is not (at least not in quite the same way).

I argue that Wright and Graham et al.'s search for a properly 'discursive' politics may perhaps not interact with the way many people witness and are involved with politics on these platforms. That is, many people use these spaces not necessarily through discussion, but rather through posting material and reacting, or perhaps just watching. This recalls Groshek and Koc-Michalska's (2017) codes for different types of users: limited as they are, they are a starting point in considering how people interact online.

Much of the political material I witnessed (re)posted during the leadership campaign did not invite discussion, but 'likes', shares or retweets, respectfully. These are political interventions into a space that is not formally political - Wright's (2012) 'third space' - but they are not necessarily directly discursive. Rather than dismissing them as 'broadcast' (Graham et al. 2016: 16), I argue that the conversation happens indirectly, through the algorithms and bubbles that reinforce one another, to the extent that the more you like an individual's political posts, the more of them you may see. While Graham et al. (2016) acknowledged that people may be active in choosing who they talk to, what is missing from this analysis are ideas of variations of use in these bubbles. Conversations may happen differently on social media sites than in a directly discursive manner, but through likes, retweets, clicks over a period of time, they are still a type of social interaction, perhaps even a different type of conversation. They reveal something not only of the bubble's political potential, but also its attitude towards politics, more generally. Thus, I might argue that I can code my social media bubble as Corbyn-empathetic due to the elongated discussions through the (re)posts that reaffirm the bubble-space as 'Left.'

I propose that it is not so much what people create that matters online, but what people share, when they share it, and who sees it, on what, and who responds to it. Harris and Harrigan (2015) have suggested that social media bubbles are 'echo chambers' but I

think what we can witness here is not just an echo, as this to me seems to play down the affective potential for these spaces. In this, I am following Hallinan (2016: n.a.) in understanding that ‘affect plays a key role in making sense of the social and phenomenological experience of online interactions, the socio-technological structure of digital technology, and the larger function of social networks in contemporary society’. The experiences I witnessed were not generally part of the established political discourse present in the media or from the political campaigns, and thus political parties, at least, remain for the most part uninvolved. Moreover, it is important to note that while this political discourse was (evidently) present on my social media feed, these posts were amongst others that fit the label of everyday small p- politics; as well as those which were not necessarily politics – these were not captured, however.

THE ELECTION AND AFFECT



Figure 7.2: Facebook's 2015 general election post

On the day of the election, there was one prominent feature on social media, and it was not party-based. Facebook added a 'button' which would announce to 'friends' that one had 'voted' if pressed (see Figure 7.2): a public announcement of having fulfilled one's public duty. A few who pressed it announced their voting direction, but generally it appears people were trying to encourage others to vote by showing that they had. This was really the biggest breach of overt politics into this 'third space' that I witnessed during the run up to the count, itself.

However, the morning of the election result revealed Facebook as a space of affect. That is, it was a space where the 'discharge of emotion' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 467) was in evidence. There were many different ways people reacted and my feed predominately saw an outpouring in many forms (to which I, too, contributed). Occasionally this was in the form of a personal message with no link, such as one which garnered twenty-three 'likes' (at the time of capture), which simply read: 'Seriously, David fucking Cameron again? We are a country of morons.' Another expression was a recourse to cynical humour in the quote from the sitcom TV series, *Peep Show*: 'People like Coldplay and voted for the Nazis. You can't trust people, Jez.' Many decided to post links that offered an opinion or a representation of a feeling they felt correct, such as a picture of a small child holding up his middle finger, or a 'meme' that was a manipulated poster of David Cameron from the Conservative campaign (see Figure 7.3). All these moments of sharing, fit into the idea that these people were using Facebook as a space of affect, but, perhaps more crucially, a safe space to vent. Perhaps we may consider this a style of conversation, where ideas, memes, articles, and so on, are shared. The affect 'spreading' in this moment was not a particular 'thing', but rather a feeling and an attitude towards the election result. These affective expressions interlinked with the everyday political uses of Facebook, interlinking the big P-

political with the small p- as one post might follow another. Not only did people turn to Facebook to express their feelings, they also used a variety of media to create different nuances, which speaks to what Allford and Pachler (2007: 257) call 'the hyperlinked nature of [social] media'.



Figure 7.3: A manipulated national Conservative election campaign poster of David Cameron

I offer these expressions as evidence as to the affective use of the space of social media, as well as to the meaning of the election result. Away from the quantitative result, an election thus has an affective result and people came to social media to share their feelings and find comfort with others. The contrast with the apparent apathy towards the Labour campaign suggests more an indifference to the campaign than to statist politics: there was anger and disgust present in these posts. This affective result of the election drove the use of social media in a particular way: as a space of shared grief and to voice anger at the anonymous 'other' who voted in a contrary fashion. The 'bubble' worked to reinforce this, both through friends sharing and commenting but also with the algorithms predetermined to show users likeminded things. This sort of sharing does not mean that all

the outpourings were creative and therefore looking to be shared because they were creative, but rather was a plea for a shared space where people could express themselves and not feel alienated, even if the result alienated them. Nor does it mean that they were part of the Labour assemblage beyond the simple act of voting for them – they still did not post pro-Labour sentiments, partly because their relationship to the party was one held in the ballot box, rather than in social media.

THE LEADERSHIP ELECTION

As with my interviews, it became impossible to avoid the subject of the leadership election on Facebook. One person posted a BBC article with the comment at the news Corbyn was a leadership candidate, 'Fucking hell, Corbyn did it. That's nipped my post rave blues in the bud. ☺'. This was not because Labour drew many people into its assemblage in and of itself, but that Jeremy Corbyn's campaign for the leadership went 'viral', it was 'spreadable'. A social media focus was a conscious campaign strategy of Corbyn's campaign, having found only antagonistic attitudes in the mainstream press (Seymour 2006). However, the official campaign's success did not exist in isolation: it was not alone in being a vocal body of support of Corbyn, and scorn continued to be thrown at Conservative government figures, as it was after the election result and during the campaign.

I argue that the use of social media represented one rhizomatic tactic of the war machine. The posts supporting Corbyn were a mixture of official campaign material and non-official types, coming from unpredictable places (thus rhizomatic), seemingly territorialising those who were willing to participate in insulting the Tories, and thus becoming into a party assemblage to which they had previously been resistant. One

interviewee suspected that this social media campaign and support was spontaneous, rather than planned. This impression is important because the spreadability of it was based around sharing a play on the idea of something positive (Corbyn), rather than either the official material or the meme-based bile that came forth during the election. Avoiding the norms of mainstream media (the State), the war machine adopted social media to pursue its popularity. It is telling that the hashtag #JezWeCan became the campaign slogan, harking directly back to the campaign that originally helped put Barack Obama in the White House in 2008 ('Yes we can'), but also adopting the influence of Twitter through the adoption of a 'hashtag'. Memes were important for the campaign, as they were what predominately infiltrated third space.



Figures 7.4 and 7.5: Facebook posts of Jeremy Corbyn as Star Wars rebel hero, Obi Wan Kenobi

One prominent non-official meme compared Jeremy Corbyn to Obi-Wan Kenobi (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5), the character from *Star Wars*. This meme played not only on the

passing similarity (elderly, slim, bearded white men) between the two, but also the role that Kenobi played in the film *A New Hope* – the images above feature the direct references to Kenobi’s role against the Empire and the ‘dark side’. It was thus coding the Labour establishment, as well as painting Parliament as either an evil Empire, or as a ‘wretched hive of scum and villainy.’ By contrast, Corbyn and his followers were the heroic Rebels. In a meme, we have the placing of Corbyn within popular culture that implements the PLP as the enemy. And, within my bubble, this spreadability seemed successful in territorialising people into the Labour assemblage, or at least, the leadership contest. In another post (Figure 7.6) someone enthused about Corbyn as an ‘O.G.’ (short hand for Original Gangster, meaning he was there before it was ‘cool’, and has stayed on that path) in reference to his history of protesting, while another enthused that ‘I like Jeremy Corbyn and so does Brian Eno’, thus bringing together their cultural expressions together with their political expressions. Others went on to post more specifically about joining Labour to “vote for a genuine opposition.”



Figure 7.6: Facebook post of Jeremy Corbyn as an ‘Original Gangster’

At the same time, there was also an element of reinforcing a shared code this group had, of the perceived right-wing of Labour. As such, some of the social sharing saw an opportunity to rip into a party people did not believe in and thus attack Blair. Miliband was not mentioned: it was ‘New Labour’ that was attacked, one person commenting while sharing news that a union was backing Corbyn: “The I’m-alright-Jack, careerist, Blairite, Torylites in Labour must be kicking themselves. The gravy-train is over. Apparently, some Labour front benchers have said they won’t work with him. SEE YER!” Miliband’s attempts to code the party had not territorialised many within my bubble, and thus the Labour leadership was not yet quite beyond the New Labour influence.

These memes and the social media commentary give an insight into who, at least in my bubble, were being territorialised by the Corbyn leadership war machine. The bile against New Labour and their enthusiasm for Corbyn revealed what they felt Labour should

be coded as, and perhaps what they felt it once was: a left-wing socialist party. It also reveals their relationship to the wider Labour assemblage. This expression of Labour had been left out since disappointment following 1997, or more particularly, the decision to go to war in 2003. While they may have voted for Labour in the past, they were now vocally backing a leadership candidate, defending him from other attacks, and attacking others. Some were joining as members, others opting to become a supporter. The bubble of social media intensified their exposure to pro-Corbyn material, boosting the perception of his popularity through the confidence in posting the material. Crucially, it tells us that they were political during the general election, just not territorialised by this political party. I argue that this war machine revealed the 'latent potential [...] revealed by experimentation' (Buchanan 2007: 14). Thus, the assemblage being territorialised by Corbyn's campaign was from both inside Labour, as well as from an anti-Statist assemblage who were already political. It was not that they were made political by Corbyn, but became Labour through the campaign.

CONCLUSION

Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 427) write that 'collective bodies always have fringes or minorities that reconstitute equivalents of the war machine [...] in quite specific assemblages.' I have argued that this is the case of Corbyn's 2015 leadership campaign within Labour. Thus, in this chapter, I demonstrate that through the leadership contest, the campaign prompted a direct questioning of who Labour was. In the terms of this thesis: what is the assemblage of Labour to become? Becoming from a (political) position 'outside' both the New Labour and Miliband Labour leadership, Jeremy Corbyn's campaign war

machine was set up against what can be perceived as the State. In this case, I argue that the previous Labour leadership and PLP was understood to be the State, or as one friend put in Facebook (as quoted above): those coded as ‘I’m alright-jack, careerist, Blairite, Torylites’. Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 500) emphasise this: ‘each time there is an operation against the State – insubordination, rioting, guerrilla warfare, or revolution as an act – it can be said that a war machine has revived, that a new nomadic potential has appeared’.

At the 2015 conference, some members were still performing the perceived concept of ‘the politician’ (specifically, Khan): an act of perseverance by those invested in the State. On the other hand, those involved in the Corbyn assemblage (knowingly or not) were in the war machine arising from the periphery of the party:

collective bodies always have fringes or minorities that reconstitute equivalents of the war machine - in sometimes quite unforeseen forms - in specific assemblages [...] There are always periods when the State as organism has problems with its own collective bodies, when these bodies, claiming certain privileges, are forced in spite of themselves to open onto something that exceeds them, a short revolutionary instant, an experimental surge. A confused situation: each time it occurs, it is necessary to analyse tendencies and poles, the nature of the movements. (Deleuze and Guattari 2013a: 427)

As I remarked in the fourth chapter, at the 2015 conference those who were behind Corbyn seemed to be revelling in a sort of Spinozan ‘joy’, an empowerment for those who had been territorialised into the assemblage (Ruddick 2010). This war machine changed the wider Labour assemblage.

This is clear by a brief glance at sheer numbers. On 7 May 2015, the day of the general election, Labour had (around) 187,000 members. Six months later, on 8 October 2015, Labour had 370,658 members, and 121,295 registered £3-supporters. The Labour Party’s General Secretary, Iain Nicol (2015), claimed on Twitter that in the twenty-four hours following Corbyn being announced leader of the party, 15,500 people signed up.

Following this, there is the issue of who these people were, and who they were joining.

George Eaton (2016: n.a.), the political editor of the left-leaning *New Statesman* magazine, said that ‘Corbyn [...] is likely to benefit’ from this increase, with the allusion that he was by the end of the contest, the favourite to win by some measure.

I have shown that that the war machine affected the world of those active Labour members that I interviewed. It was an affective event and those who took care of the local memberships were overwhelmed with new members. One interviewee expressed the shock to the Labour assemblage that the number of new members suggested: “I mean, Peter Kyle’s got a worse problem than I have. I think he told me that he got 1100 people joined. I mean, that’s fucking ridiculous!”⁷⁵ Indeed, by the summer of 2016 it was thought that the Brighton and Hove Labour Party was the largest in the country (Mason 2016) and that the Labour party was perhaps now the largest ‘social democratic’ party in Europe. The biggest question after ‘who are these people’ was ‘what are we going to do with them?’ Perhaps a better question would have been: ‘what are they going to do with us?’, an issue that became clear when the Brighton and Hove Labour Party was ‘suspended [...] and annulled the result of a vote that installed supporters of Jeremy Corbyn in key posts’ (Mason 2016: n.a.).

The accusations of ‘entryism’ raised worries about the party being taken over by people who may not have had Labour’s ‘best interests’ at hand. They were not seen to have earned their vote in the leadership election – although, some were also willing to wait to let the new members prove themselves. We might see this as another performance of a party

⁷⁵ Interview 11

enacting itself as removed from society – a wish to control the encounter with an assemblage, much of it from outside the party that has come into it. These members did not know quite yet, how to perform that variation of the Labour assemblage I witnessed in the 2015 general election campaign. Some within Labour evidently thought that the Corbyn campaign was the ‘war machine’, that his leadership would recode it into a ‘party of protest’.

For those territorialised by Corbyn’s campaign it eventually became less about what he said and did and more about (as Page and Dittmer [2016: 77] wrote on Trump): ‘*what is felt* [...] it is primarily his way-of-being in the world, and not policy, that draws supporters to him.’ It was the combination Corbyn’s way of being in the world that ended up having a powerful resonance with people, territorializing some whilst others wrote him off as an old, ineffectual socialist. One interviewee argued that there was no question about whether Corbyn would do ‘the right thing’ or not: he simply did it.⁷⁶

What partially helped to territorialise many people was the combination of both Corbyn’s campaign, on social media and on the ground, and the non-official campaigns on social media. While this was a ‘mobilisation’ of some people within the bubble, it is not just about those who may be coded ‘active’, but also about ‘passive’ users, and ‘uncivil’ users. Social media became central. If the 2015 election was not an ‘Internet election’, the Labour leadership election certainly was. The use of social media rather than mainstream media was also intentional, and Corbyn became a highly shareable code on social media and managed to infiltrate spaces that had not been penetrated by either Labour’s 2015 general

⁷⁶ Interview 1

election campaign, nor any of the other political party campaigns. This was achieved not only through the official pages, but unofficially as well. I argue that the most important social media penetration was that it managed to territorialise people who did not regularly post about party politics, at least in a positive manner. The campaigns did this both by playing on Corbyn's 'way-of-being' in the world, as well as by a creative use of popular culture. Those affected around Corbyn infiltrated third space and managed to territorialise people who were sympathetic – thus it was not necessarily his 'official' campaign that was successful. The unofficial campaign was successful to the extent that there was an unofficial celebration held in Trafalgar Square in London when Corbyn won, organised on Facebook by someone unconnected with the official campaign. This suggests that social media allows for novel interactions between big P- politics, popular culture and the everyday. In this way, it contributes to findings in digital anthropology that argue that 'social media is not a universal platform but rather intricately bound up in a multitude of cultural practices that dictate where, why, and how it is used as a form of communication' (Duggan 2017: n.a.).

The successful territorialisation this war machine had in social media draws attention to the enmeshing of Big P-/small p- politics. That is, those State-Political concerns which are expressed in the spaces of the everyday, particularly by people whose tendency was to pour scorn on those involved in Politics.

We must not understand this campaign in isolation, however. War machines are meant to be part of larger assemblages, and their components may be part of, or connected to, any number of assemblages. For instance, one of the people I interviewed had been involved in the beginnings of Podemos in Spain before moving back to the UK. As argued in the introduction to this chapter, this was no linear causation of one thing simply following the other. Rather, there were a multiplicity of interwoven events. Much of this would not

have happened without the 2003 Iraq invasion, the 2008 financial crash, the Conservative majority victory in 2015, the mainstream press disparaging Corbyn's campaign, and the membership reforms created by Miliband in 2014. The day after the Conservative victory, there was a protest against it – this was not an event *for* Labour, but against the Government. A month after the general election, amongst other marches around the country, a crowd estimated to be between 70,000 and 150,000 marched in London, from the Bank to Parliament Square. This was the largest demonstration the city had seen for a while (Gayle 2015). But neither was Corbyn's rise inevitable, rather it was one potential line of flight that followed Miliband's resignation after the electoral defeat. The listed events above are selective and one must also look at events around movements such as Occupy, Climate Camp, UK Uncut and others, that relate to the brief history above.

This chapter contributes to several different literatures. First, electoral geography literature by showing, again, how the general election has a meaning outside simply its numerical result. This is done by linking, not only through the testimony of the interviewees, but also by observing how my social media bubble reacted to the immediate result. Second, through focusing on this social media space, I contribute to the growing literature on digital social media by exploring the qualitative experience of political movements of those behind Jeremy Corbyn, Indignados, Occupy and others. Specifically, it contributes to political geography by providing a unique analysis of these social movements through the concept of the 'war machine' by using it to shed light between the Corbyn campaign(s) and the relationship with Labour.

One of the major queries Deleuze and Guattari have of the war machine that I have not thus far talked about is what happens when the war machine tries to take over the State machinery. Again, there are many interpretations of this concept. Deuchers (2011: 5) has

argued that we can witness such an event in the Nazi occupation of the German government state machinery. By contrast, Tampio's understanding (2015) of the war machine is not about gaining their power structures, but organising differently. Deleuze and Guattari (2013a: 413, their emphasis) theorise that: '*The State has no war machine of its own*; it can only appropriate one in the form of a military institution, one that will continually cause it problems'. Thus, some important questions are raised over the relationship that this theory of the war machine and State highlights, to which I shall turn in my concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION:

A DIFFERENT STORY

Over the course of the last seven chapters I have made a case for looking at political parties, campaigns and elections through the concepts of assemblage and affect. By introducing them to the more-than-human turn in human geography, I offer them as (re)conceptualized and (re)introduced to both electoral and political geography. This is a major departure from the traditions of electoral geography that otherwise continue to focus on quantitative methods, as well as those of political geography, into which I would like to (re)introduce political parties as an active consideration. As I argue in Chapter 2, there are still many unanswered questions about the role of political parties and their relationship with society and the State, post-political or not, such as who bodies them, what happens when someone becomes a member of them, and how they relate to the society in which they are operating. In this thesis, I have shown that elections consist of more than their quantitative result and the subsequent codes through which electoral geographers (and others) tend to use to understand them. I have also addressed three calls for change in political geography that I highlighted in the introduction and Chapter 2.

First, as I have already said, I wish to help ‘turn’ electoral geography to qualitative approaches through the concepts of assemblage and affect, which is the overarching theme of this thesis. I have pursued this through the investigation of different contexts in which I researched the Labour Party. Second, I wish to address the blurring of big P- (State) and small p- (everyday) politics. I pursued this by becoming part of the everyday make-up of an election campaign, as well as witnessing how politics were active in Wright’s (2012) ‘Third

Space.’ Third, I wish to pay heed to Springer’s (2016) call to deeply question the State, specifically its formation and maintenance. This I have done by looking at the performances of a political party. Behind these calls for change was a focus on the relations and affects that made the Labour Party. As I stipulated in the introduction to this thesis, while Johnston et al. (2017) suggest that pre-election polls left little to the imagination with regard to what the 2015 result would be (a Conservative majority), this did not correspond with the response of the affective bubble in which I was enmeshed. The exit-poll that predicted a Conservative majority elicited a reaction from my own social bubble (on Facebook): one friend wondered “[s]o how accurate are these exit polls? If it’s true I may as well fill up my bath and start heating up the heroin overdose”; another echoed Paul Keal, saying that “the BBC didn’t poll me.” This speaks to the surprise felt in response to the only poll that was read to outwardly suggest a Conservative majority. Indeed, in the weeks and months following the election there were several media stories about ‘why general election polls were so inaccurate’ (Clark 2015: n.a.; also see Cowling 2015; Hope 2015; Oppenheim 2015). While Johnston et al. (2017) may be correct in their close(r) scrutiny of polls, my study suggests that different stories emerge from a statistical analysis and an affective one. To the quantitative electoral geographer, the election result was not a shock; to my Facebook feed, the Tory majority was deeply upsetting and unforeseen. I would suggest that my findings offer the potential to (re)conceptualise political parties, campaigns and elections.

To begin with there is the concept of the ‘political party.’ As I argued in Chapter 2, for much of electoral geography the party and society have been considered as two different and separate entities. They are not considered as being in opposition to one another but certainly the relationship between the two is infrequently studied. Models of ‘cleavages’ and neighbourhood effects are asserted, resulting in understandings that they

are separate entities, one going towards the other but never *of* the other. I would argue this is 'overcoding'.

In contrast, I offer a concept of the political party and its relationship to society as dynamic. Perhaps it is worth reiterating my single-line definition of a social assemblage: '*a constantly changing collective body composed of singularities that does something*'.

Conceived thus, political parties are not solid organizations with an ahistorical 'core', with something 'essential' about them, removed from a society upon which they depend. Instead an assemblage approach demanded I looked at the relations between the component parts and questioned how an assemblage was continuously becoming (de)territorialized and (de)coded. Seen thus, neither the party nor its hierarchy was a given and performance was crucial. It also meant being attentive to more than the 'social machine', as Colebrook (2002: 81-2) puts it: how this machine relates to the virtuals, abstract machines, technologies, materials, and so on. For instance, while I provided in Chapter 5 a portrayal of a 'technopoly' by the door-steppers, which I argue to be focused on data collection and not affect, there was still affect within that assemblage. It was the experience of enacting the campaign that further territorialized people into Labour, changing people's (including my own) relationship to one another and thus demonstrating how the party was becoming. This was not simply a performance of top-down instructions, but a campaign saturated with affects both potentially for those *targeted* by it as much as for those *within* it. Each chapter revealed different moments (cuts) of becoming with the people who tried to embody it, as well as materialize it. Under this lens, Labour is shown to be a party with blurry-edges, one that was social and is always changing.

Following this, there is the concept of the 'campaign'. I argue the campaign to be becoming in an affective world. Parties may use a variety of techniques in their electoral

campaigns, including door-stepping, emails, leaflets and attack advertisements. Some of the discourse present in the campaign will be framed as rational and focusing on policy. Indeed, many concepts of elections and the voting analysis are based around this rational relationship between a political party and a voter. However, political parties have been adopting marketing techniques for their campaigns (Issenberg 2013; Rawnsley 2001) and there is also a growing body of evidence about the affect of campaign material (Westen 2007; Civettini and Redlawsk 2009). My findings in Chapters 5 and 6 supported this focus on an affective understanding of these materials and the campaign, more generally. However, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focused on how the leadership(s), people, materials and virtuals relate to one another in the everyday experience of the campaign. In Chapter 5 I showed how the door-step campaign affected those *enacting* the campaign itself, just as the experience of embodying the campaign changed door-steppers. In Chapter 6 I focused on the abundance and coding of (physical and digital) material, finding them to be a focus of agency, rather than discourse. The handbook suggested that the discourse of the material was not that important: materials were a way to deliver a familiarity with the party leadership's desired coding. Indeed, there were affective moments around materials for door-steppers, such as when we saw a Labour poster in a window, taking a photo (selfie or not), or when an old lady had torn up, scrawled and scribbled on calling-cards. These materials were an extension of the Labour assemblage, a code used to distinguish those who were territorializable. Through the door, they could enter into a new assemblage: lady-pen-calling cards. Thus, the campaign itself was (re)conceptualised as not just the discourse of policy and advertising, but also the people, virtuals, materials and more. Ultimately, it was affective.

Finally, by turning to assemblage and affect I argue that the concept of the election becomes more than its quantitative result. This is apparent in the events that followed the general election: the reactions expressed on digital social media, at the spontaneous protest outside Downing Street the day after the election, as well during the ensuing Labour leadership contest. The affect was not simply its aftermath, however. I demonstrate that the election was an event that was present in both conferences and the leadership campaign as well as in the aftermath of the election. In Chapter 4, in the 2014 conference the election was present in the performance of the politicians and the wider assemblage, as Miliband revealed their desired code of Labour. In Chapter 5, during the campaign, the election was one of the core (but not the only) reasons why people gathered to embody Labour. In the aftermath, in Chapter 7, the election result continued to be affective, particularly engaging my own social media bubble in a more immediate way than any previous political campaign had. I also show the election result reverberating in both the leadership campaign and the subsequent conference in 2015.

These three (re)conceptions are at the heart of my analysis. Through them, the Labour Party becomes a multiplicitous, changing, embodied assemblage embroiled in dynamic and affective social, electoral and parliamentary worlds. The Labour campaign was an attempted distribution of coding and affect so as to territorialise voters into voting for them and coding households and neighbourhoods through their technopoly. The subsequent leadership election saw the General Election result continue to affect this assemblage, changing it and coding it differently until at least the 2015 conference if not beyond.

In the next section, I will draw out some key findings of my thesis and consider them in relation to assemblage theory. I will first return to questions around the abstract

machine, what it is and how we might use it. I will then present ideas about arborescent and rhizomatic structures in relation to the hierarchy and performance of the party. In the final part, I will briefly discuss the conceptualisations of the war machine, affect and assemblage that I have used in this thesis.

THE ABSTRACT MACHINE

The exact form and role that the ‘abstract machine’ plays in an assemblage can be hard to ascertain. Whereas Buchanan (2015) asserts the necessity of one in *every* assemblage, that is not the case when following DeLanda (2006, 2013), where instead, relations define how an assemblage functions. However, there is no avoiding the intentionality of a political party campaign assemblage and I think it is possible to locate an abstract machine in the contexts that I have studied. Which precise concept of the abstract machine has the most potential to illuminate things is more problematic. Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to apply an understanding of it through Buchanan’s (2015: 385) insistence that it is the ‘deliberate realisation of a distinctive plan’, and Paul Patton’s (2000: 44) ‘software program’ analogy. On reflection, I feel I may have overlaid it much too simply with the idea of an intended ‘plan’ of a political campaign, in other words, those instructions for the party that the national leadership put together to win the election. This is one interpretation of many, as I wrote in Chapter 2, as there are many interpretations of the Deleuzo-Guattarian oeuvre. Rather, I wished to explore a possible interpretation of this concept. I wonder if perhaps a more esoteric approach would have benefitted this thesis. For example, the post-Anarchist Saul Newman (2001) has argued that

[f]or Deleuze the State is the *abstract machine* [...] [it] ‘rules’ through more minute institutions and practices of domination [...] What is important about this abstract

machine is not the form in which it appears, but rather its function, which is the constitution of a field of interiority in which political sovereignty can be exercised. (Newman 2001: n.a.)

Following this, we might understand a multifarious Labour assemblage as having more than one abstract machine. First, there is the abstract machine of State of which the Labour Party is part: this 'organises the dominant utterances and [...] languages and knowledge, conformist actions and feelings' (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 126). Thus, the State's construction of representative democracy is an extension of this abstract machine. I argue that we might see this in the prevailing logic of Labour's campaign strategy of going into a place: of taking information and proposing to work *for* the society, rather than *with* and alongside it. In this conceptualization, it appears to me as though the State's abstract machine is not too different from Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Both concepts suggest that there is a prevailing logic of the State that heavily influences and biases how a political party functions. Thus, this approach of the abstract machine finds us on ground not too far from Ralph Miliband's analysis of Labour (discussed in Chapter 2), in which he argues that it could never be a socialist party because of the prevailing hegemonic culture of Parliament. Labour's leadership may not be able to code Labour as a party 'of' society and truly work with it because of the State's prevailing abstract machine (or hegemony in Parliament) that dominates its logic and relationship with society. As I will discuss later, such an issue is revealed when Corbyn's war machine takes over Labour's leadership.

The State's abstract machine influences not only what the campaign can be, but also how it becomes in particular spaces. For instance, party political attack advertisements are restricted on television and radio but those laws do not (yet) cover the Internet. Thus, I witnessed an attack on Miliband several times whilst viewing YouTube. The attack advertisement does not come from another abstract machine outside the party or State

(different representatives from the party attack each other every day, as witnessed during the 'Tory Bashing' phenomenon) but is a reflection of how the campaign can be expressed in different spaces with different relations. Another example is how Labour calculated the 105 target seats to win the 2015 election. All three constituency seats of Brighton and Hove were target seats, but varied in their ranking of how winnable they were. This logic of targeting is defined at least in part by the State's version of electoral democracy. Finally, as I argue in Chapter 5, through a top-down 'technopoly', the role of the door-stepper was to acquire information to code and spread the coded material of the campaign through leaflets, calling cards, posters, tweets and more. I argue that this portrays the attitude of the party's local and national leadership - that their role is acting on behalf of a society it represents, not as working with it.

And yet, it differs from Gramscian hegemony, as the becoming of Labour is influenced by more than just the State's abstract machine. The Labour leadership also constructed and was subject to its own abstract machine within the confines of a campaign. It was not just the prevailing policies they wished to advance through their manifesto. This machine was what linked up that discourse with the technology (Campaign Creator and Contact Creator), the various handbooks with the door-stepping volunteers and the local leadership with national leadership. It was within the confines of an 'acceptable' becoming for the campaign, as well as within the speeches of the politician, the obliging clap of the audience at the conferences, the four questions asked by a door-stepper, the hue of red on the calling card through the letterbox, a particular style of tweet, the line-up photo taken every Saturday before a canvassing session, the door-stepping selfies, and also at a local rally where Miliband asked a Labour audience to be polite to the journalist asking a question about his relationship with the Scottish National Party.

Even this abstract machine, however, remains a component of the assemblage. So many moments of the election were not confined by it, but affected it and were also affected by it. The Internet phenomena of ‘Milifandom’ was a rhizomatic event, more akin to something out of a war machine, rather than the prevailing experience of the hierarchical performance of a State’s party. This gives rise to the question of unforeseen consequences in relation to the abstract machine. While it may find a simple expression in certain components, as in what the door-step volunteers were meant to do, the results can be unexpected and complex. Perhaps this is because as people are enmeshed in several different (multiplicitous) assemblages at once so they also relate to many different abstract machines. For some experienced volunteers who went off-piste and asked different questions than those approved, this was perhaps due to a memory of another abstract machine when “I trust you’re voting Labour” was the expression a volunteer might use in a previous campaign. The fragility of a hierarchy is revealed when the expressions of abstract machines diverge from one another. Being part of the left-wing CDLP meant that some candidates talked of policies differently from the party leadership. During the 2015 campaign some CLPD MPs and MP candidates openly advocated for the renationalization of the railway, a policy on which the national leadership was hesitant. In moments such as these, individuals enact agency differently from the implicit and explicit ‘governmentality’ and ‘biopower’ of the campaign practices.

The abstract machine is, then, one component of an assemblage. One contribution of my project is that, while I do not attempt to provide an exact definition of what the abstract machine is – I leave that for people more theory-enabled than me – I have demonstrated that it is one component within an assemblage. Moreover, an assemblage and its components are perhaps not subject to one, but to many, abstract machines. It may

be tempting to write that these different abstract machines have a hierarchy or a scale: the State is on top, defining the major boundaries, the party follows, defining the campaign and its expressions, then the CDLP defines the voice of an assemblage within that. However, that would not address how abstract machines are expressed through the different relations components have to them. A single abstract machine does not control every expression within the assemblage. Thus, Corbyn's campaign defied the prevailing parliamentary party's abstract machine to which his campaign was supposed to be subordinate. His 'way of being' a politician may fit into Labour's history but did not fit into the direction that the party leadership had taken since 1997. The discourse of socialism that he pursued defied some of the boundaries of the State's abstract machine. This was evidence of a war machine: its nature is not of the State. Although not all its features challenged the State, the war machine was a unique expression that gave rise to rhizomatic events, and defied Labour's abstract machine. Thus, it can be seen that it is possible to locate several abstract machines within the Labour assemblage with differing relationships to the leadership. There was no 'essential' Labour to which all parts related directly.

However, to restate, this is one possible interpretation of the concept. The two interpretations of the abstract machine I have looked at in this thesis suggest that it performs two very different tasks: the first, a plan for an assemblage to follow; the second, the expressions of an assemblage. Other scholars have taken the abstract machine to suggest something else. In the Deleuzo-Guattarian toolbox, one not only has to interpret how to use the tool, but to assemble it in the first place.

The performance of hierarchy and the party/society divide are two themes that have occupied much of my analysis. At the beginning of Chapter 2 I argued that electoral geographers' codes asserted a party/society split and that these understandings of the relationship between a political party and society were problematic. I do not think that concepts such as cleavages or the neighbourhood effect have the potential to look very deeply at those relations. Following ideas of becoming and fluidity in Deleuze and Guattari's work, my original presumption was that society is a somewhat amorphous notion and that political parties are necessarily bodied by people and people have to live in a society. It is just that they are in bubbles that are as limited as anyone else's. For Deleuze and Guattari (2013b: 418), the State appears 'quite perfect, quite complete': and its 'concern [...] is to conserve' itself. And yet, in conceiving something as always 'becoming', the space between society and the State is potentially smooth, as it is in the actual that the virtual lines between the 'political parties' and 'society' are performed. However, the relationship between is perhaps not as smooth as I had first thought.

What I demonstrated in Chapter 4 was that a performance took place in the conference of the party that was apart from and outside society. This was not just in the performance of the politicians. While the majority of people attending the party conference were enmeshed in the city outside official spaces (in hotels, AirBnBs, cafes, and so on), the official conference was confined behind a 'ring of exclusion'. Only those with bodies coded with the right badge were allowed to enter. Moreover, differently coded badges gave different conference attendees different access to the official conference space. Through

the party's coding a separation between society and party was enacted, as well as through the hierarchy of the party.

For Deleuze and Guattari hierarchies are like trees. They elaborate on Pierre Rosensthiel and Jean Petitot, who write that 'accepting the primacy of hierarchical structures amounts to giving arborescent structures privileged status [...] in a hierarchical system, an individual has only one active neighbour, his or her hierarchical superior' (as quoted by Deleuze and Guattari (2013b: 17)). Like the need to code households through their four-question 'conversations', I demonstrated there was a desire for an arborescent discipline in the organisers. The data gathering was to be done by the volunteers and a team of organizers would manage this and this may appear quite a straightforward hierarchy (top to bottom): national leadership – local leadership – organisers – volunteers.

That Labour is a top-down party is not new. Blair was reported to have a 'presidential' style (Assinder 1998: n.a.), and reforms under his leadership took power away from the conference and other policy-forming bodies. This was not a new hierarchy, either, but a re-ordering and empowering of it. Indeed, as Ingle (2008: 89) said, the conference was now supposed to be "under control." This hierarchical impression was left on some in their relation to the wider party, as one interviewee said when I asked him of his relationship with the politics of the party: "really, I just describe myself as a foot soldier." It was not for him to make political decisions or hold detailed political opinions, he was there to do "anything [...] to help where I could." This is evidence of the hierarchical culture of Labour, what Ward (2008: 149) calls 'the ideal type of Institution Man, the kind of person who fits the system of public institution which we have inherited from the past. It is no accident that it is also the ideal type for the bottom people of all authoritarian institutions.' It transpired

that he was also a council candidate and held a role in his constituency Labour party. I would argue that the hierarchy is consensual.

Following a reading of Hardt and Negri (Keucheyan 2014), I regard power *over* only possible through power *to*. For me the moments when the hierarchy was struggled over, were moments to 'cut' at the continuous becoming of Labour, as I felt those cuts might reveal the relations that maintain the hierarchy. Deleuze and Guattari (2013b: 21) have written that 'the root-tree and canal-rhizome are not two opposing models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing [...] the second operates as an imminent process that overturns the model and outlines a map.' The concept of a shadow cabinet provides a hierarchy of people thought to have the right to speak for Labour, but since different members have different concepts of Labour, that legitimacy is always being questioned. During Corbyn's leadership, there have been many PLP voices that refused to acquiesce to it, and so brief the press against him. Corbyn's right to speak for the party was being challenged. As such, components are always learning and relearning hierarchies and improvising. We can see this appeal for an arborescent structure in those members' concerns over who was eligible to vote for the leadership (Chapter 7). Some felt it was the right of those who had sweated over the campaign to choose the next Labour leadership. They felt the entry of the new members and £3-supporters undermined this, and that a party/society divorce should be performed. This entryism was reterritorializing Labour in a way with which many already in the party did not feel comfortable.

Rhizomatic potentials, on the other hand, are witnessed by being attentive to how agency is invested. Deleuze and Guattari (2013b: 21-2) argue that:

the rhizome connects any point to any other point [...] it brings into play very different regimes and signs, and even nonsign states [...] reducible neither to the

One nor the multiple [...] It is not a multiple derived from the One [...] It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions.

Rhizomatic potentials can be seen more evidently in a war machine assemblage (Corbyn's leadership bid) that embraces those potentials, for instance in the involvement of a 'non-official' campaign and popular culture expressions of support that appeared on social media. The utilization of 'memes' suggests an interaction with a rhizomatic digital social media-based popular culture. These have the potential to undermine a hierarchy, and we find the affects of the campaign appearing in (rhizomatic) unexpected spaces. These people were not turned on to politics through Corbyn but were territorialized through the affect around his campaign. It was not that Corbyn's campaign did not wish to have a hierarchy, but that they also embraced rhizomatic moments in a way that other campaigns did not.

It would be simplistic to say this is why Corbyn's campaign succeeded while the other three floundered. Similarly, it would be wrong to argue that the 2015 Labour campaign failed because it overcoded space, and thus the party was too arborescent. I have no evidence for either of these claims and the campaign I was part of in Hove was successful. Instead, performing the Labour campaign affected the volunteers, changing me and others and made us into a social unit for those door-stepping sessions during the electoral campaign. However, the arborescent approach did not affect many in my social media bubble and the effect of imaging a party as a cohesive, hierarchical body that is removed from society but goes to it, denies the more rhizomatic, smooth potentials.

REFLECTIONS ON THE WAR MACHINE,

ASSEMBLAGE AND AFFECT

In the summer of 2016, Corbyn defied a bid challenging his leadership. The position of those who objected or found problems with him was neatly prefigured by Deleuze and Guattari (2013b: 412): '[f]rom the standpoint of the State, the originality of the man of war, his eccentricity, necessarily appears in a negative form: stupidity, deformity, madness, usurpation, sin.' The State does not understand the man of the war machine as they are of two different logics. The challenger, Owen Smith, and the other candidates in 2015, were reflections of MPs who were subject to the State's abstract machine, who embraced marketing techniques in the 1980s and 1990s, and turned the party ever more towards polling. The war machine forged a new space in Labour that affected a more rhizomatic approach. Following Deuchars' (2011: n.a.) reading that the war machine is an expression of rebellion against the State, this arises through its ability 'to carve out space, rather than occupy the space created by a higher or pre-given ordering principle or process.' The war machine trying to territorialise the Labour assemblage was not composed of new mystical bodies that were alien to the party, those bodies that make up the war machine are also becoming embroiled within Labour and opening new spaces within it. Those people that were territorialised into this war machine, performed a different way of becoming Labour and becoming political, generally. They carved out a new space within that 'State' through the campaign and its subsequent victory. Linking the Corbyn war machine to other war machine assemblages that had, themselves, carved out new spaces in the UK (such as Occupy, Climate Camp, or UKUncut), as well as those abroad (such as Indignados/Podemos, Syriza and the various Occupies) suggests that this territorialisation happened in many

different places and over many different spheres. I similarly encountered this on digital social media. Those people were not made political by Corbyn's campaign. Rather, they came to Labour through the war machine of which he was the head. Perhaps this is another form of Connolly's 'resonance machine'. As one acquaintance expressed it during the leadership campaign while we sat around a kitchen table: "I don't get it. I'm an anarchist, I disregard and distrust the State. And yet, I find myself paying three pounds to vote for Corbyn and I feel very hopeful."

The theorization of the war machine does not deliver a promising prognosis for Corbyn. Deleuze and Guattari (2013b: 413, their emphasis) stipulate that the State inevitably triumphs and '*the State has no war machine of its own.*' When the State and war machine join, there are difficulties – one is consumed by the other. They cannot combine to form a Spinozan 'joy'. Deleuze and Guattari go on to question whether it is 'the destiny of the war machine, when the State triumphs, to be caught in this alternative: either to be nothing more than the disciplined, military organ of the State apparatus, *or to turn against itself*, to become a double suicide machine for a solitary man or a solitary woman' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 414-5, their emphasis). Indeed, as the exploration of the abstract machine above suggests, the war machine expresses itself outside the State's expression. Moments such as Corbyn's victory may change the State, however:

There are always periods when the State as organism has problems with its own collective bodies, when these bodies, claiming certain privileges, are forced in spite of themselves to open onto something that exceeds them, a short revolutionary instant, an experimental surge. A confused situation: each time it occurs, it is necessary to analyse tendencies and poles, the nature of the movement (Deleuze and Guattari 2013b: 427).

Conceptualizing Corbyn as war machine is useful not for just understanding his victory, but also potentially for understanding the subsequent issues that he has had during his term as

leader. For instance, the reported continued infighting that has undermined his leadership (Syal 2016) may be understood as one of the consequences of the ongoing struggles between the State and the war machine in the latter's attempts to recode Labour. This assemblage has been changed, modified, and moved by the war machine. Questions remain about how this war machine will continue to change Labour, as well as about those new members who have coded themselves Labour and the subsequent potential for territorialisations. However, with the formation of Momentum within Labour to support Corbyn's leadership, which was based on his campaign team, and Corbyn's change on defence strategy (Stewart 2017), we may be seeing both the disciplining of the war machine, and the solitary (political) suicide of a man. How does the smooth war machine relate to the striated party? Will they force a rhizome into an arborescent structure? In short, what will become of Labour under Corbyn's leadership?

These questions, concerns and potentials arise from the new space I have demonstrated in electoral and political geography that witnesses the election as entwined and enmeshed in multiple becomings, and specifically in the changing shape and expressions of Labour. Through much of 2011, the journal *City* published a series of articles where different academics debated what assemblage is and what use it is. In their reply to McFarlane's (2011a) opening article on the potentials of assemblage, Brenner et al. (2011) reasoned that assemblage does provide an orientation that allows for very rich description, but by itself (or, at least, the way it has been used thus far), it does not supply an in-built critique of anything. They conclude by arguing that assemblage should be used in conjunction (or in an assemblage, if you will) with other concepts. The underlying concern is that description is not enough.

A variation of this concern is that assemblage by itself can be little more than a complex way of describing something. This concern is not alien to even some of the weightiest proponents of assemblage, for as Acuto and Curtis (2014: 11) have observed (that) there is the 'inherent risk of privileging description' in assemblage thinking. Indeed (as I noted in Chapter 2, Buchanan (2015: 388) argues that DeLanda's influential understanding of assemblage potentially renders it 'as a new kind of causality, one that acts without conscious intention or purpose.' For Buchanan (2015: 385), the emphasis on the 'abstract machine' in an assemblage that 'does something' provides a way to limit assemblage and perhaps renders it enlightening: it is an 'arrangement' rather than an 'assemblage'.

However, my analysis of my fieldwork shows that to give one component too much agency within an assemblage neglects how it is an expression of the relations between them. Swayed by Buchanan's emphasis, and my understanding of it, I looked for an abstract machine. However, I found too much chaos and complexity to be able to propose that its all-importance was to be an accurate 'realisation of a distinctive plan' (Buchanan 2015: 385). I felt I had to be attentive to not just the human aspects of the assemblage, but to the material and virtual aspects as well, and try to break with limited and 'abstract concepts' of political parties.

It can be hard to know where to stop or start with assemblage as everything appears interconnected on some level, and perhaps it is worth acknowledging that complexity. Buchanan (2015: 383) insists that concepts 'should have cutting edges. It should be possible to determine with precision the specific characteristics and features of a concept.' That does not always seem the case with a DeLanda-based assemblage. In the conferences and during the campaign, assemblage provided novel questions such as where spaces of the

conference actually were, or who was Labour during these moments, precisely because it blurred boundaries and brought to light complexity. McFarlane (2011b) argues that

Description in the context of assemblage thinking examines not just how current conditions are historically drawn together (and then held together or reassembled), but to how events disrupt conditions, form new connections, generate different encounters and produce alternative urban imaginaries [...] description exposes a multiplicity of differences, an accumulation of possibilities to think differently about how [things] might work. (McFarlane 2011b: 735).

However, I do not find description to be enough. If we are openly coming from an orientation that recognises the researcher's position in it, then the inherent socialising and prior-to research one has gone through (in other words, our biases) is difficult to get away from. Thus, assemblage can never be used alone because we cannot rid ourselves of knowledge of other concepts and theories, even if we cannot know how we may become in relation to these concepts. Megoran (2006: 626) warns of this very thing when discussing doing ethnographies, as '[there is] no guarantee that an ethnographer can correctly understand what he or she witnesses [...] ethnography remains more sensitive to [...] self-ascribed [...] than [...] research-ascribed [...] categories and meanings.' Despite this, we can understand the rich-descriptive use of assemblage as in keeping with Deleuze and Guattari's work, especially when considering the Nietzschean influence on their work.

These description-rich assemblages create what might be a Nietzschean 'tragic academia'. I argue that the concept of the chaotic, always becoming, always fluxing assemblages reflects Nietzsche's influence on Deleuze and Guattari, particularly his argument that Greek tragedies embraced and wished to reflect the chaos of reality (Spinks 2003). Thus, perhaps we should understand the complex, entwined and enmeshed perspective that assemblage leads to, as trying to embrace that chaos, or 'Dionysus'.

And yet, while assemblage did attract my attention regarding the construction of hierarchies, how agency might be constructed, and the chaotic expressions of components that made up the Labour party, this perspective seemed to me to be available through other theories that precede assemblage. Specifically, anarchistic and workerist/autonomist Marxist theories (for instance, see Ward 2008; Marshall 2008; Springer 2016; Keucheyan 2014) that hold critiques of capital, the State, power and hierarchy at their centre, alongside hopeful potentials of people and actions outside their logics. Even concepts regarding the body of free jazz music, where the musicians in the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s reconceptualised the components of music and collective music-making (Gioia 2011) allowed me to open up ideas of power structures and hierarchies, and provided an aural display of the difference.

However, all these concepts have their limits. While this thesis was heavily influenced by DeLanda, it may have taken too much from his broad understanding of assemblage. As Acuto and Curtis (2012: 6) have noted: his stance has gone ‘so far’ as to make ‘assemblages the building blocks for an entire ontology or metaphysical system.’ Personally, I side with Brenner et al. (2011) who say that it should not be used alone, perhaps ultimately finding it to be too broad, too amorphous and too vague. In the final analysis, assemblage is still just one potential way of looking at subjects, but perhaps not always the most illuminating.

This is in contrast with the concept of affect. Affect is a body of theory that can prove very frustrating, but once analysis is being done using its ideas, it is hard to remove ideas of affect from that analysis. While I continue to find ideas of affective atmospheres to be a problem, I show that unsaid and non-conscious reactions to events are nonetheless useful ways of understanding them, which is how my chapters on the material of the

campaign and social media grew. As such, although it too has its critics, I find Colebrook's (2002: 38) idea - that we can 'think of affect in terms of a form of pre-personal perception. I watch a scene in a film and my heart races, my eye flinches and I begin to perspire. Before I even think or conceptualise there is an element of response that is prior to any decision' – to be the most useful. This analysis has led me to argue that the experience of digital social media has the ability to change (affect) us through our use of it and to experience our relationship to different inputs (specifically, our social media feed and the news media in this case) in affective ways. The outpouring of emotion in the aftermath of the election, and the need to be part of it, suggested something more fundamental before it can be translated as 'emotion': a gut reaction.

Assemblage, affect, abstract machines, arborescent/rhizomatic structures, war machines, and so on, are concepts meant to be used as tools. They are not final answers. Moreover, what these tools are, and therefore how they can be used, is sometimes hard to grasp although they do have the potential to illuminate things in a certain way that other theories have not done thus far. Therefore, while not seeking to replace the contributions of other electoral and political geographers, I have sought to open the field to a more dynamic and enmeshed understanding of political parties, campaigns and elections. Through them, the 2015 election continues to reverberate and enter into new relations with other components and assemblages that are continuously being (de)territorialized and (de)coded into Labour.

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